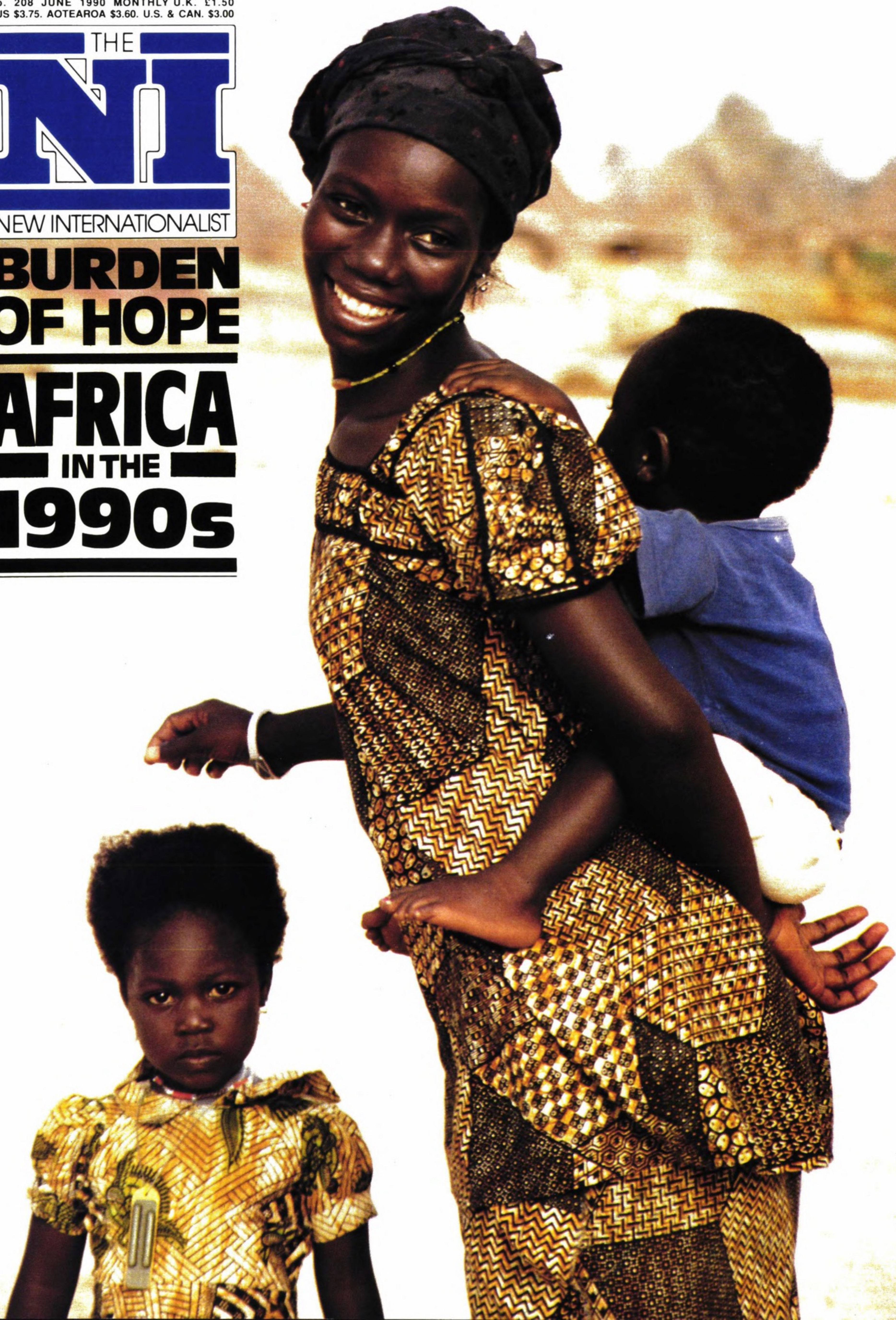


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BURDEN OF HOPE

AFRICA IN THE 1990s



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New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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At one point during the last few months, I considered calling this magazine 'Scratching around to find hope for Africa.' Journalists are apt to become irreverent when they are unable to unearth the information that they need in a hurry.

Of course there was hope. I knew that. I had come across a great deal when I travelled in Africa. Like the women in Kenya who set up a co-operative farm to generate income for their families. Or those who worked as unpaid village health workers in Zimbabwe advising local families on nutrition and health care. There were Africans I knew who felt so passionate about their governments' lunatic and unjust policies that they were prepared to be tortured rather than remain silent. Such people offered hope of the most impressive kind.

The problem begins when you start scouring Africa's horizon for bright-spots on a larger scale – like an economic boom or two. Good fortune in the near future is very hard to see. And that is why the NI

collective asked me to do this magazine in the first place. The prospect for Africa – particularly south of the Sahara – looked terribly bleak and we needed to think hard about why this was and what could be done to improve the situation.

Meanwhile, amid this difficulty, New Internationalist moved offices. Imagine the chaos. Our entire publishing operation – from the typesetting equipment down to the paperclips in the bottom of our desk drawers – was transferred into boxes and left to its fate with the removal people.

This magazine was still in its early stages. It consisted of a heap of books, papers and photos horribly vulnerable to the uncanny knack such things have for sliding behind radiators and similar places never to be seen again. The lot had to be bundled into a knapsack and stashed in my bedroom – not necessarily a guarantee of safety – until it was safe to let it out again.

Poor Africa was rather squashed when it saw the light of day. It had experienced many exciting adventures, including a journey down the motorway in a car that broke down and had to be towed back.

Fortunately no parts of the magazine were lost. And the search for hope continued, aided and abetted by journalists

from around the African continent.

Finally I had so much material that I couldn't fit it all in. The last few days of putting the pages together have been a mad rush of hacking and shaping, trying to squash large quantities of words into small spaces.

Among the things I was most reluctant to dispense with were photos of some of the contributions Westerners have sent to Africa as emergency aid – mountains of slimming products donated to the undernourished residents of Somali refugee camps for example; electric blankets and treatments for heartburn. And for the women of Mozambique who have to walk several miles daily to fetch water, a motley assortment of very pointed, high-heeled shoes.

More unhelpful footwear would be hard to imagine. But then the West has never been a tower of strength to Africa, as you will discover...

Sue Shaw

for the New Internationalist Co-operative

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Dampening words

Every day, 60 per cent of women in the Third World rise long before daybreak to fetch water (*Thirsty for life* NI 207), sometimes from miles away up and down steep mountain paths, on



long, back-breaking journeys.

I find it very disappointing that the NI issue on water hardly brought out this vital aspect of the 'water and power' issue, specially considering that the editor was a woman. Her short story on the subject was extremely ambiguous, almost saying that the way men wield power and have always wielded power is the only way it can be wielded. Does the NI really subscribe to this outmoded view? Much of the rest of the magazine was about dams and business interests: boys playing with big toys again. Please let's be serious. This was altogether too flippant a treatment of an important subject.

Dorothy Tredgold
Sydney, Australis

Slap start

Universities and research institutes are chronically short of up-to-date literature in many developing countries, and this hampers their work. The Science Literature Aid Project or SLAP is a newly-formed group set up under the auspices of the Third World Science Technology and Development Forum, which aims to collect unwanted technical journals for shipment to libraries in the Third World.

NI welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Possible sources of this material include individuals who receive journals, university libraries and libraries in industrial research centres. There is a particular need in the fields of agriculture and literature. If you can help please contact: SLAP, 9, Daleview Avenue, Glasgow, Scotland, G12 0HE.

Daphne Wasserman
Glasgow, UK

Chilly reception

I was disappointed with your global warming issue (NI 206) as there was very little about turning down the heat. I expect all NI readers know the causes of global warming by now. What they need are practical ways to help. And I don't think headings like *Fight for fairness* and *Love thy neighbour* will persuade the wealthy to reduce their standard of living. It is the gulf between them and the Third World poor that forms the basis of their self-esteem.

Nat Brown
London, UK

Literally confusion

I agree with Wayne Ellwood's statement (*Turning down the heat* NI 206), that life on earth is interconnected with the earth itself. But to claim that inanimate substances are also part of life goes too far. The air that enters my body is part of the system which sustains my life, but is not part of me in

the way my lungs are.

Richard Wilson
Bracknell, UK

Tiger rider

The Africa *briefly* in your March issue (NI 205), illustrates again the tyranny that exists in many Third World countries. President Houphouet-Boigny holds onto power in the Ivory Coast through the support of the French Government. Only he and the Paris Club have benefited from his despotic ideas. But he is living on borrowed time. He could never emulate the illustrious Nyerere and step down. He is like someone riding a wild tiger who daren't get off. If only the local people could take a leaf from Eastern Europe's book and unseat the rider.

Mr BC Fundafunda
Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

Music madness

Your reviewer of Simbomba (*Reviews* NI 205) does no favours to this fascinating music when s/he tries to score points for it at the expense of other musicians – notably the Bhundu Boys who are described unnecessarily as 'imbecilically cheerful'. As a jazz musician interested in many music forms, how heartily sick I am of reviewers trying to whip up controversies between musicians – in this case from totally different backgrounds and idioms. This is an arti-

ficial approach which may make writing a review easier but shows no respect for the diversity of music or the sincerity of musicians.

Frances Knight
Hastings, UK

Bullying Cuba

The US is like a schoolyard bully that continually interferes with other countries. It has begun beaming American propaganda – in Spanish – into Cuba from Florida. Presumably the defence establishment of Washington is seriously under-employed as a result of lessening tensions in Europe. It has certainly taken the first step towards starting another war.

Richard Wooger
Whitby, Canada

Bland banter

Reading your issue on *Trade wars* (NI 204), I couldn't believe this was the same NI. It is much too sanguine about the global economy and the Third World's prospects in it. Have you caught the 'we've won' fever?

David Keppel
Essex, UK

Green snobbery

One major reservation to the issue on *Green Consumerism* (NI 203) is that it didn't cover the questions of cost and availability. Green consumerism is essentially a middle-class phenomenon and highly inequitable. In my home town the poorer wards are entirely devoid of Green items and the people here have neither the time, the transport nor the money to travel miles looking for them. Co-operatives could distribute green goods cheaply. But meanwhile perhaps we should also consider more deeply whether the person next to us in the supermarket deserves our condemnation because they have bought the cheapest washing-up liquid.

Andrew Griffiths
Preston, UK

Undissolved issue

As an old-age pensioner I have been attempting to live a 'green lifestyle' all my life (NI 203). Arthritis dictates



that I use a washing machine and some electrical gadgets, but at least I thought I would use an ethical washing powder; I bought Ecover. I did not expect it to wash whiter than white, but I did expect it to dissolve. I had to re-wash a whole load, hand-picking out the undissolved grains of powder. I tried dissolving it in water at varying temperatures but with the same result. It may only be suitable for areas with soft water but, if so, it should say so on the packet.

Mrs S Kenyon
Isle of Wight, UK

Clean cars

Your *Green Consumer* magazine (NI 203) omits any reference to diesel cars which are better in many respects than petrol-driven ones. A modern Indirect Injection

Diesel engine produces much less pollution providing it is correctly adjusted and maintained. The UK Government could help encourage the use of cleaner cars by adjusting the tax on diesel.

FR Partington
Tayside, Scotland, UK

Repellent recipe

In your *Green Consumer* magazine (NI 203), you mention that the Canadian green consumer guide offers a detailed list of recipes for everything from washing powder to furniture polish and moth repellent. Can anyone provide sources of these recipes in the UK?

Veronica Garvin,
Belfast, UK

Sexual fascists

I applaud your issue on homosexuality (*Pride and*

Prejudice NI 201). My suggestion to gays who are dissatisfied with the service given them by the Church is to form their own church and refuse to bless the unions of homophobes. May God protect me from sexual fascists.

Adrian Redgers
London, UK

Enthusiastic alarm

I am an Ethiopian refugee in Sudan. I read your magazine. It is my best choice for it contains alarming information that the Third World should challenge.

Leake Tsadik
Khartoum, Sudan

Peace talk

Those readers who welcomed the issue on the Palestine/Israel conflict (NI 199) will be interested to know that the Labour Middle East Council

– which has campaigned on behalf of the Palestinians since 1969 – is currently seeking to expand its individual and affiliated membership. To this end we will be organizing a series of meetings throughout the UK on the theme of 'Israel and Palestine: which way to peace?'

We will also be developing campaigns around the issues raised in your magazine within the UK Labour Party and trade union movement. Further details from me at: the Labour Middle East Council, 21 Collingham Road, London.

Mr Kevin Durham
London, UK



The views expressed on the letters pages are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER FROM LA PAZ

Raising them tough

Susanna Rance explains why Bolivian child-rearing beats the West's 'trapped housewife' approach.

'LET her die,' said Julia bitterly as two-year-old Mamuca coughed and tossed with fever, huddled in a blanket on the kitchen floor. It took me a while to grasp that my sister-in-law wasn't really willing her child's death. She was defying fate to take the baby away, stealing herself to bear the blow of losing this daughter as she had lost her first.

In the highlands only the toughest infants survive, trained to resist the cold, hunger and hard work from an early age. In Inca times babies were bathed in cold water and breast-fed without being held close and caressed lest they turn soft. New life is so fragile here that babies are not considered 'people' until they have passed their infant years.

When they can walk and talk a ceremonial first haircutting grants them their own belongings – money and gifts, laid on a shawl and blessed with each lock severed. This is their rite of passage into a community which gives them both social obligations and protection against a hostile world.

But until then they are swaddled: swaddling expresses the constraints and enveloping security that constitute nurturing in a harsh environment. So it was that my mother-in-law, with grim determination, bound my own baby's head immobile, her tiny arms strapped to her sides, her back straight as a rod. 'She won't like it,' I protested, willing the baby to rebel inside the rigid bundle. Sure enough, Nina screamed until her arms were freed, but then she slept soundly, wrapped tight inside the striped shawl which jogged against her grandmother's warm back.

Like most first-time mothers, I was already anxious about how best to care for my new baby. My doubts multiplied under the barrage of well-meaning advice on Andean child-rearing techniques. 'Don't hold her all the time, you'll spoil her rotten,' my sisters-in-law would say as they squatted to cook or wash clothes, their own babies casually slung in shawls across their backs.

Walking down the street with baby Nina in a kangaroo pouch was

like running the gauntlet. Each neighbour would stop me to peep at the baby, scold me or warn of the dire consequences I was inviting through my ignorance. 'Her back will grow crooked if you carry her like that,' tutted the newspaper lady. 'How can you take her out without a hat? She'll catch cold and die,' shrieked the fruit seller, herself sweltering in the innumerable layers of clothing which offer protection against morning chill and midday glare on the Andean high plateau.

As I worked out my own style of mothering, I looked at the parents around me and saw puzzling contrasts between stoicism and indulgence, harshness and devotion. But I also saw that this was a child-loving culture such as we in the West have lost. Everywhere children are part of life, participating in chores and festivities, rituals of joy and mourning, rural harvests and union marches. They are neither resented nor idolized nor kept apart, but play, fight and join in the activities around them. Bedtime is non-existent since children simply fall asleep when tired and someone gently lays them on a blanket.

There were many benefits to living in a child-loving society. I could breast-feed in office meetings, on buses and on the street. My neighbour Luisa, whose daughters were in their teens, would call to say: 'Where are the kids? Send them around, I'm missing them.' Grandparents, godparents, friends, helpers, uncles and aunts formed a secure network of people who made the children feel happy and wanted.

When Nina was four and Amaru two, we went to England for several months. It was a rude shock to experience the 'trapped housewife' syndrome for the first time. As I pushed the double buggy up the hill from Tesco's, I would see countless other mums on their way home, struggling with frustrated kids and their own isolation and depression. We were in a sort of underworld, denied adult company – and denied the chance to work outside the home knowing that our little ones were being well cared for.

Back to Bolivia, back to work, and suddenly child-care ceased to be an issue. People smiled and talked to children on buses instead of shushing them. The nightmare of bedtime, when other people expected my kids to be out of the way and I was too exhausted to stand them for another minute, faded into the past. Nina and Amaru were freed from the box of domestic isolation, and I felt nothing but relief to be in a culture where women aren't expected to make the inhuman choice between being 'efficient' workers and 'good' mothers.

Susanna Rance has lived and worked in Bolivia for several years.



Africa teeters on the brink of collapse. But there is hope, as Sue Shaw explains.

BURDEN OF HOPE

AFRICA

IN THE

1990s

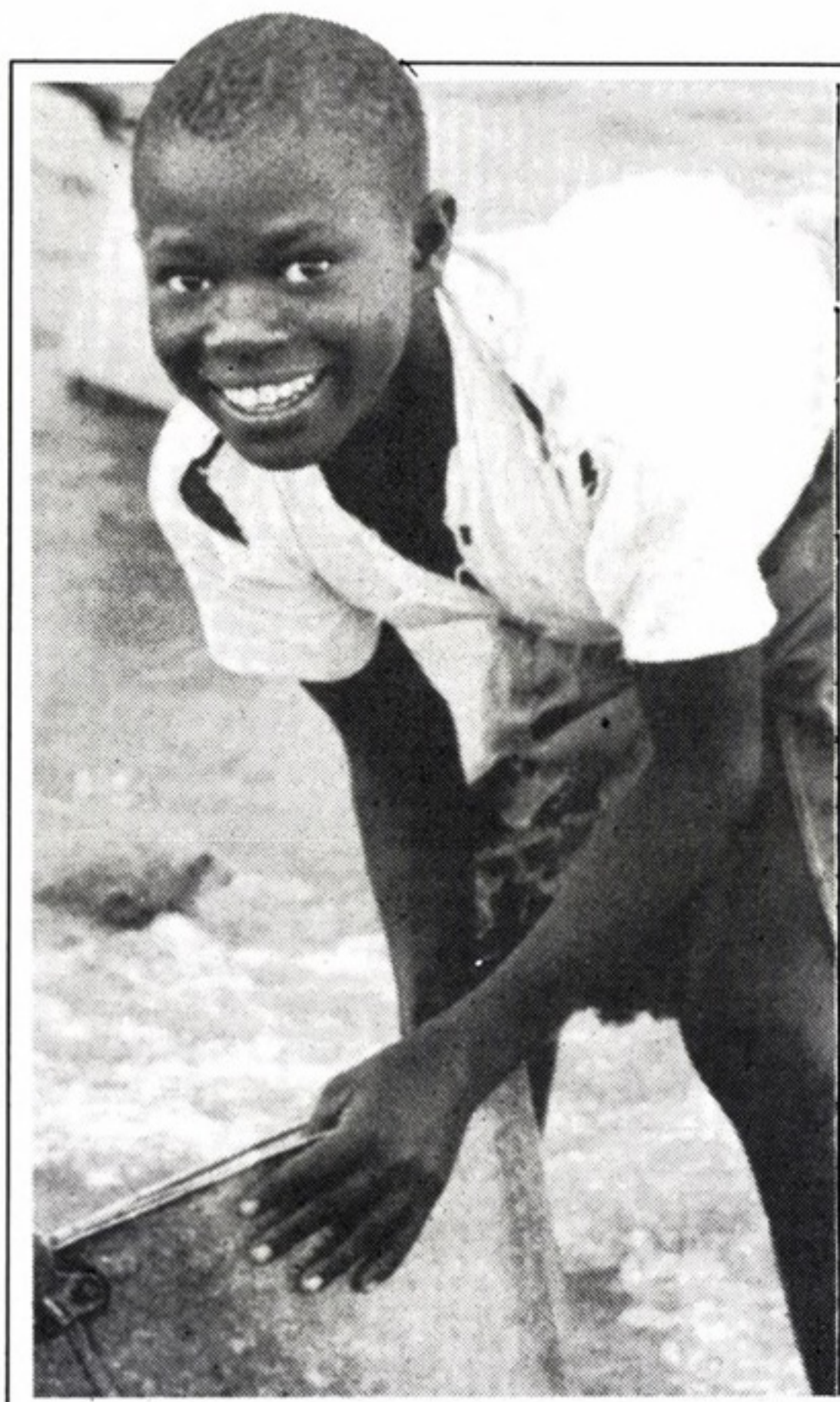


Photo : Geoff Sayer/Oxfam

THE release of Nelson Mandela is something you will tell your grandchildren about. A smile will play around your lips as images flood back recalling where you were; who you were with; how you felt; and you will catch your breath, straining forward in your chair as if to glimpse again the living legend walk stiffly out of Victor Verster Prison in South Africa after 27 years imprisonment, down the road towards freedom.

It was that sort of event, you will say; more emotional than the first man on the moon, more impossible than the end of the Cold War. You had wished for it all your life and then it happened. Suddenly there was hope for Africa – and with it the world – because one man was set free.

With luck, your grandchildren will wonder what all the fuss was about, never having experienced an international shortage of hope. But you will remember.

Things looked grim for Africa, you will say. Africans overall were almost as poor as at independence. Incomes had fallen for the last decade, hunger had increased, unemployment was rising and Africa's foreign debt of \$230 billion was equal to its gross national product – a

proportion almost twice that of Latin America's – making it the most heavily debt-burdened region of the world. Worse was to come as the effect of AIDS added its weight to the economic load'. In South Africa white domination had survived decades of black resistance and international pressure. As we entered the last decade of the twentieth century, your grandchildren will hear in disbelief, there was still a country where people were denied the vote simply because their skin was black.

Then Mandela was released. Grey-haired and supremely dignified, he raised his fist in a salute and declared that the words he had spoken at his trial in 1964 'are as true today as they were then: "I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."'

He towered like a moral giant above other world leaders. And he fired belief that the human spirit could endure suffering and still remain intact; that integrity could survive; and that the liberation of South Africa was finally in sight.

Cry freedom

What else you tell your grandchildren remains to be discovered. But one thing is certain. Internal and external pressures are preventing South Africa's apartheid system from ruling in the old way; hence Mandela's release, the unbanning of the African National Congress – along with 33 other political organizations – and the lifting of press restrictions in South

Africa. The political and economic isolation of the apartheid state has brought an absence of new investment to the country and dried up its markets. With no easy sale for its exports South African firms have been forced to discount down – by 20 per cent in some cases.

Things are changing in neighbouring Namibia as well. For the past 60 years Namibia has been a colony and satellite of South Africa, with an overwhelming dependence on it as a source of imports, and a market for its own exports.

Now independence has given Namibia some control over its own considerable natural resources. The population has enormously high expectations which could prove hard for the new government to meet after years of apartheid rule. But the country got off to a promising start earlier this year, with a peaceful multi-party election that drew over 90 per cent of the population, and a constitution enshrining the best guarantees for human rights and democracy in Africa. With one of the continent's highest gross national products per head – around \$1,272 in 1989² – and a government committed to ensuring an equitable distribution of wealth, Namibia's future looks promising.

But these positive developments in Southern Africa stand out all the more as beacons of hope because of the general gloom further north. The Namibian government's aim for self-sufficiency in food, for instance, suggests that it has learned a lesson from the desperate experience of other African nations.

Over the last 30 years food shortages have hit all but five sub-Saharan countries. More than two million Africans starved to death in 1985. Another four million currently face starvation in Ethiopia as a result of drought and war. South Africa's destabilization programme has brought hunger to Mozambique and Angola. But the shortage of food is continent-wide. At its heart lies insufficient food production.



Nelson Mandela: 'I greet you in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all'.



Pulling together – Ugandan fisherpeople hauling in a heavy catch from Lake Albert.

Farming has been bled dry. In most African countries state marketing boards buy cash crops from farmers at unreasonably low prices. Farmers in the main coffee, cocoa and cotton exporting countries earned only about half the export value of their produce in 1984³. The other half went into state coffers. This is understandable given African governments' hunger for the foreign exchange which might help them develop – but it is scant encouragement to the small farmer.

Food last

Yet even farmers producing crops for export are well off compared with those supplying food for domestic consumption – with the result that cash crops continue to be grown on land which could be used for growing food. When a drought hit the Sahel in 1983, food had to be imported. Yet the same year five Sahelian countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad – harvested a record 154 million tonnes of cotton fibre. Food aid and cheap food imports conspire to keep food prices low so that farmers have little incentive to grow more than they need for themselves. When drought comes there is nothing left in reserve.

The only way to ensure that more food is grown is to pay farmers more for doing it and supply the back-up that they need. But raising food prices in the cities provokes dissatisfaction in the urban population with its greater political clout – so in practice it all-too-rarely happens. As one relief worker in the Sahel put it, 'Starve the city dwellers and they riot; starve the peasants and they die quietly. If you were a politician, which would you choose?'

The problem stems from colonial times. The imperialists levied taxes to be paid in cash which forced Africans to grow crops like cotton and cocoa that were needed by the distant factories of the imperial parent country. Meanwhile the colonial economy fostered in Africans a

drive to consume: African colonies provided a new market for goods like clothing, shoes and bicycles manufactured by those same distant factories.

Independence did little to alter this colonial pattern. More concerned with the urban hunger for consumer goods than with possible future food shortages, fledgling African governments set themselves the task of trying to catch up with a West that had been industrialized for 150 years. On the advice of foreign experts, many newly independent countries started up industries which relied on imports of essential components from the West – thus keeping money flowing northwards. Industry was prioritized and agriculture relegated.

Abidjan, the capital of Ivory Coast, was soon assembling luxury cars for its excessively paid officials. Countries like Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal manufactured beer, tobacco, textiles, flour, footwear and cement; Kenya made bulk, low-value consumer goods like soft drinks and canned products, while Zambia, Zimbabwe and Zaire produced light-engineering goods linked to their mining industries. Sub-Saharan Africa's industry grew at the dizzying rate of 15 per cent a year between 1965 and 1973³.

Indeed manufacturing industry accounted for over 15 per cent of the gross domestic product in 18 countries by 1973¹. Future development along the Western industrial track still seemed at least plausible. During the 1970s however industrial growth dwindled. By 1981 it had started to decline. The party was over.

Sub-Saharan countries earned most of their foreign exchange by exporting primary commodities like cocoa, coffee and copper. When commodity prices fell and oil prices shot up in the 1970s, there was precious little hard currency left to buy essential imports. Borrowing heavily from Western governments and banks bridged the gap but it was a short-term



Photo: Ron Gilling/Panos

Greening Africa – planting trees in Niger.

expedient. Only oil-exporting countries like Nigeria could afford to maintain industrial growth.

In the course of the 1980s Africa's debt burden increased faster than anywhere else in the Third World. In sub-Saharan Africa the total debt rocketed from \$6 billion in 1970 to \$134 billion in 1988¹. Western lending agencies benefited. Debt-servicing obligations swept approximately one billion dollars out of Africa and into the coffers of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) between 1986 and 1987². 'Structural adjustment programmes' devised by the IMF and World Bank effectively an economic squeeze which cuts the public spending from which the poor benefit most – keep the money flowing out. And the stick that goads governments into repaying their debts is fear of no more loans.

In 1987 Tanzania's former President Julius Nyerere asked, 'Must we starve our children to pay our debts?' The question has been answered in practice. The answer is 'yes'. The World Bank itself now confesses doubts about the efficacy of its policies in tackling Africa's economic decline; it is currently drafting a new report tentatively titled *Beyond Adjustment*. Too bad for those who have suffered from such 'adjustment' over the last 15 years.

Straws in the wind

Better news is a recent decision by the French government to cancel all aid debt owed by 35 sub-Saharan countries – a sum amounting to two and a half billion dollars³. The amount is small compared to Africa's overall debt of \$230 billion. But the move shows cancellation is possible. Those of us who care about Africa must press our own governments to write off Africa's debt to our countries. Extracting money from the world's poorest people is a crime against humanity.

Meanwhile other straws in the wind offer hope. Changes in Southern Africa

have come at the same time as the rebirth of democracy in Eastern Europe. Though the latter threatens to divert traditionally Africa-bound aid eastwards, it also suggests that wars in Somalia, Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia will wind down. Superpower involvement is lessening. Cuban troops have already pulled out of Angola. Soviet aid to the militaristic regime in Ethiopia must decline, while East German experts cannot remain there much longer.

The upheavals in both South Africa and the communist world have fanned Africans' longing for social justice. To this end popular revolts have recently swept Senegal, Gabon, Niger and Benin. In Ivory Coast there has been an upsurge of demonstrations calling for multi-party democracy. Interestingly enough an official demonstration in Nigeria to celebrate Mandela's release transformed itself into anti-government protest.

The pressure for change is helped by nature's call to the grave: even the most omnipotent dictators are not immune to death. Presidents Mobutu of Zaire, Banda of Malawi and Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast are all very old men. Houphouet-Boigny is so senile that his periods of lucidity extend to no more than a few hours each day. Subsequent leaders may well serve their people better.

Ultimately, however, the continent's greatest hope lies in the initiative and resourcefulness of its people. Like the self-employed metal-workers in Kenya who make cooking stoves out of scrap metal. Or the firm which makes paper out of sugar-cane waste in Ghana. Africa's peasants labour together daily helping each other as they have always done.

In Burkina Faso a self-help group called the Naam movement has been quietly working since 1967 to make villages responsible for their own development. Their starting point is a respect for traditional peasant knowledge and technical expertise⁴. It works. Naam groups have built wells, set up vegetable gardens, planted village woodlots and built village shops and mills. They use whatever low-cost tools and materials are available, taking care to protect the environment.

Like ordinary people all over Africa they are engaged in the painfully difficult task of moving their continent forward. It will take years. But as one proverb says, 'When the short road is blocked you have to take the long road.' In Africa the short road to development has been tried. It led nowhere. Now the long road is all that remains. It will be taken. Africans are short of many things. But courage and determination are not among them. □

1 Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth, The World Bank, 1989. 2 Namibian Finance Dept. 3 The Greening of Africa, Paul Harrison (Paladin, 1987). 4 African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 1989. 5 Africa Recovery, Vol 3, No 1-2, October 1989.

Worth reading on ... AFRICA

Lords of poverty, Graham Hancock (Macmillan, 1989). Sharp, witty exposure of the 'aid industry'. *Africa: What can be done?* Ben Turok, (Zed, 1987). Thoughtful analysis of Africa's political and economic situation today. *False Start in Africa*, René Dumont (Andre Deutsch, 1969). A classic which continues to shed light on Africa's plight. *The Greening of Africa*, Paul Harrison (Paladin Grafton, 1987). Excellent account of Africa's problems and what can be done about them from an environmental angle. *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* published by the World Bank/The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1989. Useful up-to-date account of Africa's contemporary situation which drawn some questionable conclusions. *African Alternatives Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation* published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 1989. Thoughtful reply from African Governments to World Bank report, posing an alternative strategy to the structural adjustment programme. *Africa: History of a Continent*, Basil Davidson (Hamlyn, 1972).

Ideas for Action

Aotearoa/New Zealand

Africa Information Centre, PO Box 9339, Wellington. **CORSO Africa Projects Group**, PO Box 9716, Wellington. **New Zealand Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development**, PO Box 12-193, 24 Hill Street, Thorndon, Wellington.

Australia

Community Aid Abroad, 156 George St., (CNR Webb St), Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia 3065. Tel (03) 419 7111. **African National Congress**, PO Box 49, Tradeshall, 4 Goulburn St, Sydney, NSW 2000 Tel (02) 264 9239. **Australian Catholic Relief**, 19 Mackenzie Street, North Sydney 2060, NSW.

Canada

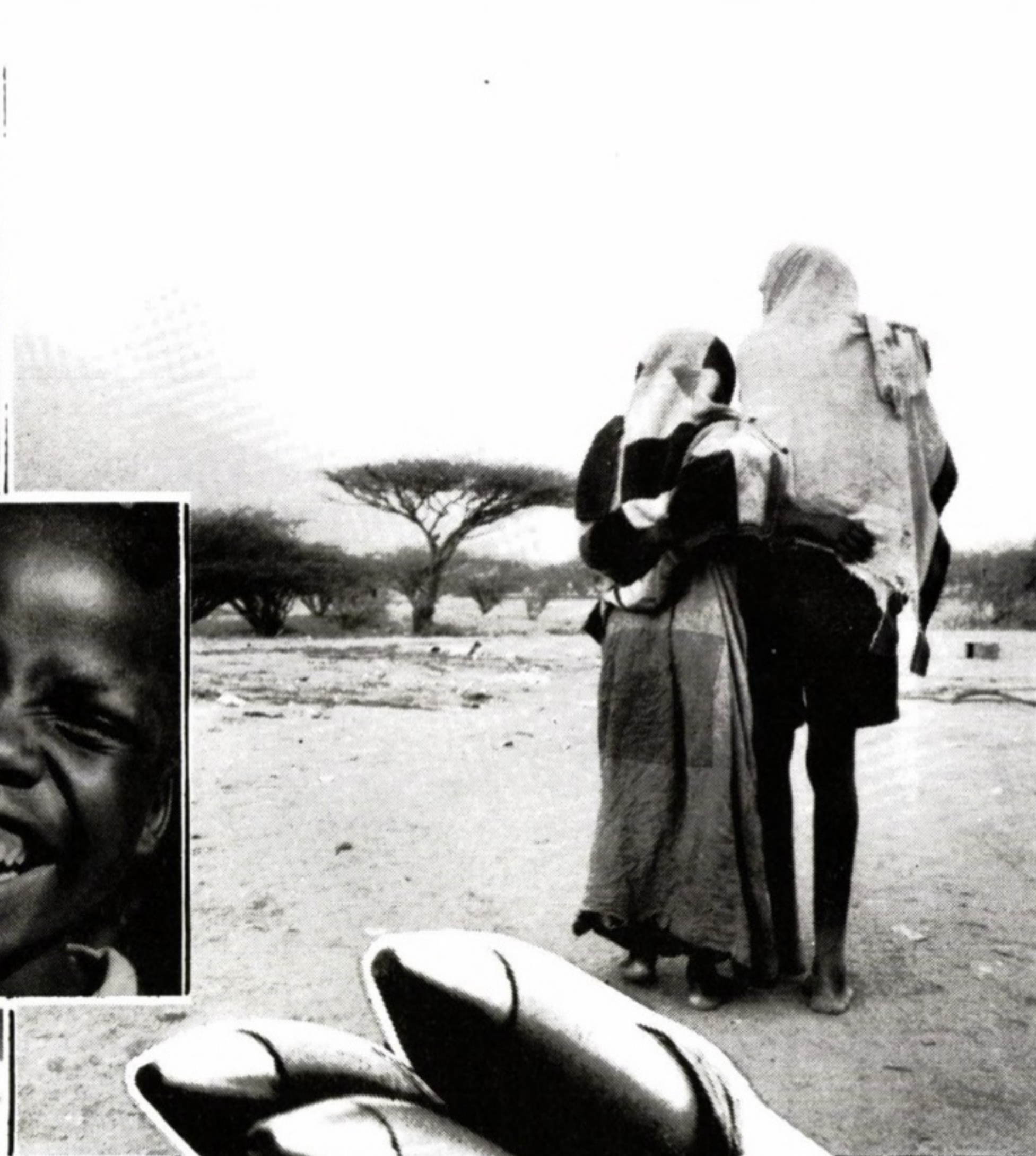
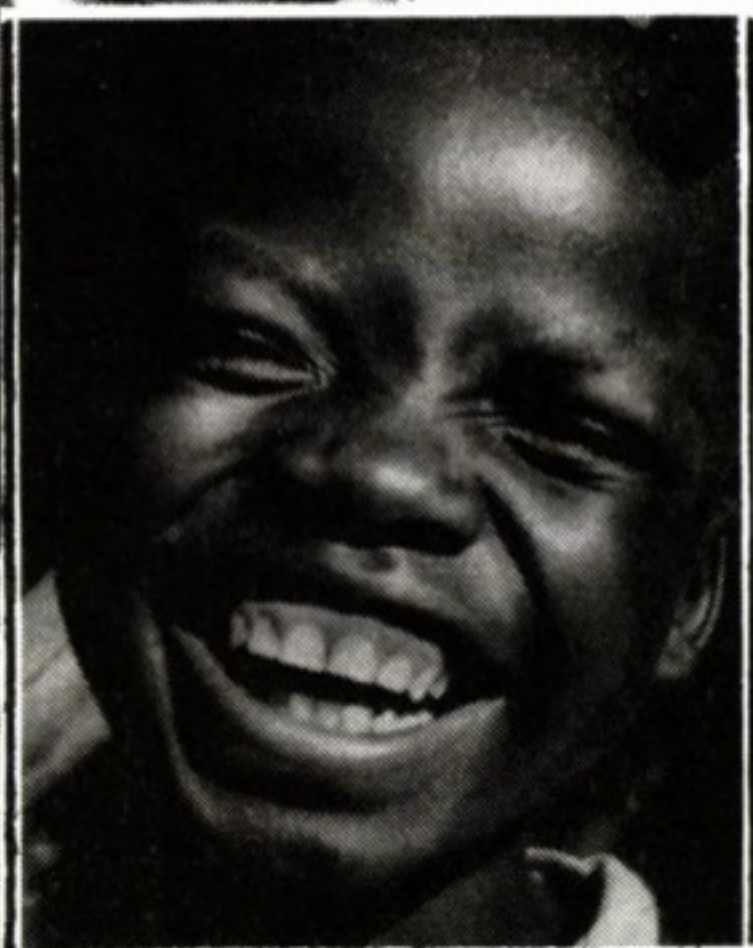
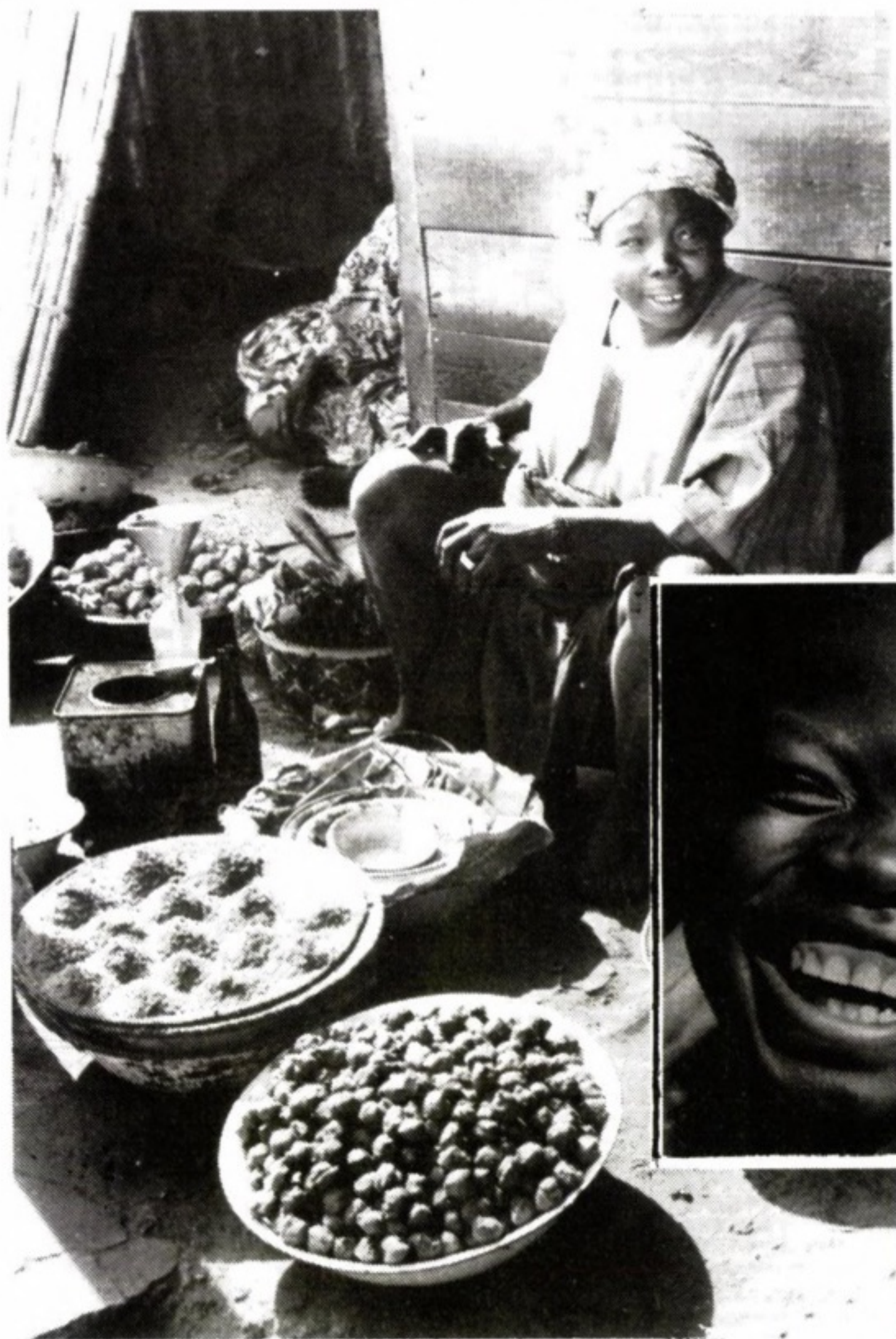
Oxfam Canada, 251 Laurier Ave. West, Room 301, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5J6. Tel (613) 237 5236. **Oxfam Quebec**, 169 Rue St Paul East, Montreal 127, Quebec H2Y 1GB. **African National Congress**, PO Box 302, Adelaide Postal St., Toronto, Ontario, M5C 2J4. Tel (416) 461 4255

UK

Institute for African Alternatives, 23 Beviden Street, London N1. Tel (071) 251 1503. Campaigns about international debt and structural adjustment programmes. Publishes extensive range of books and reports. **Anti-Apartheid Movement**, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 ODW Tel (071) 387 7966. **African National Congress**, PO Box 38, 28 Pentonville Street, London NW1 9PR. Tel (071) 837 2012. **Oxfam**, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ. Tel (0865) 56777.

USA

Oxfam US, 115 Broadway, Boston MA 02116. Tel (617) 482 1211 **African National Congress**, 801 2nd Ave 405, New York, NY 10017. Tel (212) 490 3487. **Catholic Relief Services**, 1011 1st Ave., NY 10022.



H OPE lives in Africa despite the suffering. Wars, famines, AIDS and the daily toil of poverty cannot kill it. It laughs back. And in city slums, on drought-stricken farms, in prisons, on battlefields and sick beds alike, it embraces life and refuses to be beaten.



**PROTECT
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Guns, idiots, screams

'In traditional African society no jackass waving a bazooka just gets up and declares himself chief-for-life.' Ghanaian journalist George Ayittey throws peasant logic at the politicians.

THE 1980s were a lost decade for Africa. While other regions of the Third World made economic progress, sub-Saharan Africa regressed. As many as 13 African countries are now actually poorer than they were at independence. And hideous tyranny reigns supreme in the region. Black Africa has more dictatorships per capita than anywhere else in the world: since 1957 only six out of 153 African heads of state have relinquished power voluntarily. Most of the rest were a disgraceful lot who looted and mismanaged their economies until someone booted them out of office or shot them in the head.

Modern African leaders model themselves on their colonial forebears, blindly copying alien systems regardless of the circumstances that led to their evolution. Thus the military government of Nigeria has determined that because the US has only two parties, so too must they. Accordingly, two political parties have been created for Nigeria – one 'a little to the left and the other a little to the right' – and the military government wrote up their manifestoes as well.

Military dictatorships have proved no better than multi-party democracy – and often more oppressive. And in the same

way that colonial rule was deemed 'good' for Africans because it liberated them from despotic chiefs, all sorts of charlatans and snake-oil merchants have claimed to speak on behalf of African peasants, insisting that only socialism can assure rapid development in Africa. They have erected decrees, laws and regulations – all of them supposedly protecting peasants, but really exploiting and subjugating them. As one Zimbabwean minister said: 'Socialism means what is mine is mine, but what is yours we share'.

To the peasants, all the heated debates about ideology and political systems – one-party or multi-party – are irrelevant. In most African nations, the peasants constitute the majority. Yet they have no voice in government, no protection before the law and no guarantees of human rights and freedom. Since independence they have been systematically exploited for the benefit of the tiny elites which dominate all political systems. They often pay some of the world's most confiscatory taxes – in Ivory Coast, for instance, they part with an unbelievable 80 per cent of the value of what they produce, all to enable the Government 'to finance development'.

Development for whom? is the question. Describing himself as the 'Number

One Peasant', Ivory Coast's President Houphouët-Boigny is building a magnificent basilica for himself costing an astonishing \$360 million and financed from his own pocket. Some deep pocket!

In Kenya, preparations are under way to build a 60-storey office tower for the ruling Kenya African National Union. It will cost \$200 million, and will feature a four-storey-high statue of President Daniel Arap Moi.

Meanwhile in Dakar, Senegal, the Governor of the Central Bank gets to his office without stepping out of his car. One of the perks of his job is a private lift that hoists him and his Mercedes Benz to his 13th-floor office.

Africa is a graveyard of 'black elephants'; development monuments of little economic value built with wealth extracted from the peasants to satisfy the megalomaniac proclivities of their rulers. Back in 1977, Bokassa of the Central African Empire spent \$20 million crowning himself 'Emperor' just to prove that Africa, like France, could produce emperors.

And during the 1985 famine crisis in Ethiopia, Comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam found the wherewithal to spend \$100 million celebrating his 'socialist revolution'. About \$10 million worth of Scotch whisky was airlifted into Addis Ababa for the festivities, in callous indifference to the suffering of the country's ordinary people.

For decades while Africa's peasants were being exhorted to tighten their belts, elite *bazongas* or raiders of the public treasury were loosening theirs with fat bank balances abroad. It is thought that over 3,000 Nigerians have Swiss bank accounts and that Kenya's elites have hoarded billions of dollars abroad,



One dies, one cycles by: dead bodies were commonplace in Uganda under tyrants Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Between them they killed 800,000 people.

possibly exceeding Kenya's entire foreign debt. Some of Africa's heads of state are among the richest people in the world. They would never dream of sharing their wealth with their people. Yet they demand that the rich nations share theirs with Africa.

As if economic exploitation were not enough, in Benin, Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Zaire and in many other African countries, military rule heaped brutalities and repression upon the people. In 1986, an Issaq peasant was arrested by



Soldier boys – licensed to kill, not vote.

Somali security agents for not informing the Government of the presence of rebels in his area. He did not know the difference between soldiers and rebel troops, he protested. And for that ignorance part of his tongue was cut off.

Ethiopian troops recently opened fire on a group of peasant farmers in the northern town of Korem when they refused to participate in a government resettlement program. This is mild treatment compared with that meted out to Ugandans by the successive regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, who killed an estimated 800,000 people between them, most of them innocent peasant farmers.

These same peasant farmers, many of whom are women, produce Africa's food and real wealth. But today they see their lives disrupted and their livelihoods destroyed by so-called 'liberators' as senseless civil wars and political strife rage in at least 15 countries. Useless idiots armed with bazookas blow up their countries and people, leaving a trail of carnage across the continent. Africa's refugee count now exceeds 10 million. The wars in Angola and Mozambique alone have cost over \$30 billion, 1.5 million lives and an equal number in refugees – resources that could have been used for development. Over a third of Mozambique's 14 million people have been displaced while in Angola thousands of peasants have had their legs blown off by stepping on land mines. Meanwhile the wars drag on with

elites arguing furiously about who is supporting whom in the conflicts.

Many African governments have human-rights commissions – usually set up by the tyrannical governments themselves. In Nigeria the Babangida government vowed to defend human rights. But when, in 1988, principal officers of the Nigerian Civil Liberties Organization published a report on human-rights violations, they were arrested and charged with subversion. In an irate editorial, the national newspaper, *Daily Sketch*, scolded:

'We claim to be a civilized country but we do not really respect free speech, even when it is responsible. Those who do not hold the same views as the Government are regarded as traitors, people to be harassed and thrown into jail without trial.'

Out of the 51 African countries, perhaps only six – Botswana, The Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal, Tunisia and Algeria – have a free press and tolerate criticism of government policies. Elsewhere in Africa if you write or say something the government dislikes – 'Poof!' you are dead or in jail.

Most of Africa's great writers, poets and journalists have 'disappeared' or gone into exile. Corruption goes unchallenged. Foolish government policies pass uncriticized. Information is locked away instead of being available for all. And while this intellectual barbarism holds the region back economically, African leaders lament a 'book famine'.

Even during the abominable colonial period, many African nationalists wrote and published freely. And the so-called 'backward and illiterate' chiefs of Africa have always tolerated and solicited dis-

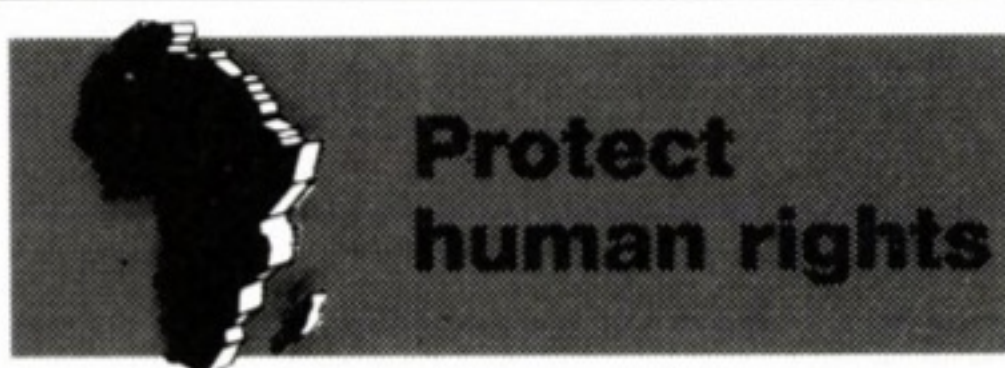
senting opinion, since by custom they rule by consensus. In traditional African society, no jackass waving a bazooka just gets up and declares himself to be 'chief-for-life'. Nor do these chiefs declare their villages to be one-party states and impose alien ideologies on their people.

Traditionally the chief and his councillors sat under a tree and debated issues until they reached unanimity. If the chief and councillors were deadlocked, a village meeting would be called and the issue placed before the people for a consensus to be reached.

There are still chiefs and kings in Africa; Ghana has 32,000. But the new elites have stripped them of much traditional authority while giving little back to Africa in return. Give Africa back to its chiefs. Had the colonialists done so, it would have been a far better place to live in today. Get the media out of the hands of incompetent elite governments and let the voices of the peasants be heard. True reform in Africa requires peasant empowerment – the enfranchisement of the peasant majority to overthrow the tyranny of the elite minority.

In Romania it is instructive to note that a National Peasant Party has been formed. One of these days, Africa's peasants, chanting *kirikiri* and waving cutlasses, will march to their state capitals and ask the vampire elites a few questions about their Swiss bank accounts. It will be an interesting spectacle to behold. □

The author is a Ghanaian who is currently Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC. His book *Africa Betrayed* will be published this year.



The problem

Independence brought with it an idealism that has been blasted apart by the brutality, looting and mismanagement of too many African governments. Whether they opted for multi-party democracies or one-party states has usually proved irrelevant for the peasant majorities who have accustomed themselves to hunger, lack of education, unemployment, poor health and brutal repression. Local democracy and freedom of expression are rare. And the peasants are powerless to do anything but watch as the fruits of their labour are squandered on development follies, personal luxuries and weapons of war and repression.

The facts

● Africa spends more than \$12 billion annually on weapons and armed forces; in Benin, 22% of the national budget is spent on the army.

● In August 1988 the Somali Government bombed its own citizens for protesting against President Barre's despotic rule and the military government of Burundi massacred around 20,000 Hutus.

The way forward

The enshrining of freedom of speech would make African governments more accountable. They would have to explain how public funds were spent and answer their critics – rather than simply silencing them. Financial leakages would shrink, making economies stronger. And populations could better ensure that money was spent on food, education, health care and other majority benefits. Improved literacy would increase people's ability to monitor national affairs. And freedom to organize politically would follow, enabling those who disagreed with leaders to offer political alternatives. The peasant majority would be able to choose whom they had in power and to get rid of unsatisfactory rulers. Aid should only be given to African governments on condition that they have a good human-rights record.



**PUT FOOD
FIRST**

A maize miracle

Can the spectre of hunger be banished in Africa? Colleen Lowe Morna reports on Zimbabwe's bold and inspiring attempt to lay the ghost.

PROVINCIAL Governor Mudhomeni Chivende steps out of his sedan to an overwhelming welcome of cheers and ululation. For the past few days the Governor's visit is all that peasant farmers in the Zvimba communal lands have talked about.

Now, as they sit on the lawn and the Governor takes his seat of honour behind the wooden table with its clean, white cloth, the air is charged with expectation.

A man rises to open the meeting. He is the local chair of the National Farmers Association of Zimbabwe (NFAZ), which represents the country's peasant farmers.

'During droughts we are having to move our animals further to get water,' he notes. 'Yet we have always known that there is potential here for a dam.' He points to a nearby depression in the landscape. 'Toward this end, we have collected \$400 (US\$200). We are appealing to the Governor to take our plea to the Government and donors, so that with their help we can fulfil our wish.'

Suddenly he breaks into song. 'Let us plough to uplift Zimbabwe,' his deep voice booms. 'Plough to uplift Zimbabwe,' the 100-odd farmers echo back in unison.

Moments like this encapsulate the drive and energy of Zimbabwe's communal farmers. They have offered a beacon of hope for Africa during the 1980s.

Elsewhere on the continent most governments have adopted policies skewed against agriculture and in favour of the politically vocal urban elite. Agricultural exports have declined, and food imports are increasing at seven per cent a year.

Neighbouring Zambia, for example, has perhaps three times the agricultural potential of Zimbabwe. But until recently it imported more food than it exported due to its concentration on copper mining.

Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, long after its neighbours, and it learned from their mistakes. It has prioritized agriculture, trying to maintain productivity among the 5,000 largely white commercial farmers and to increase production among the 850,000 peasant families.

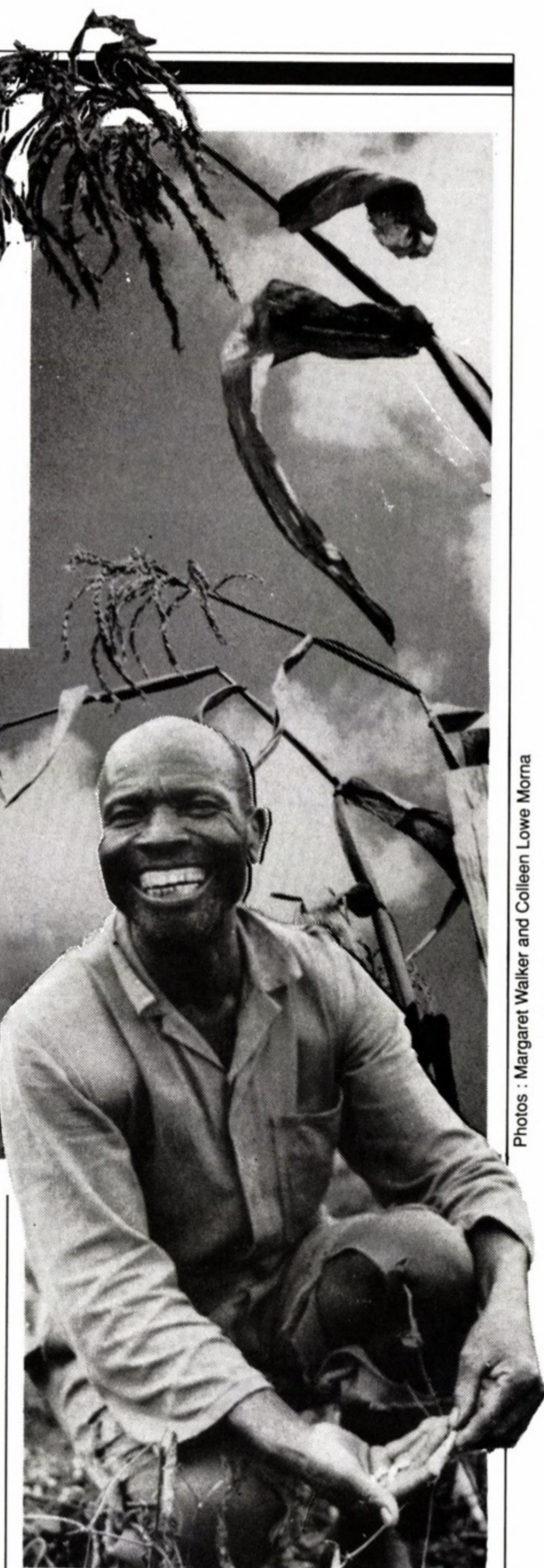


Under the former government, communal farmers never delivered more than 80,000 tonnes to the Grain Marketing Board. That amount has since increased tenfold. Except in a drought year, Zimbabwe's small-scale farmers can now feed the nation, freeing commercial farmers to produce for export.

Stunning success

This is impressive enough but peasant farmers do not only grow food. Today they also grow 55 per cent of Zimbabwe's cotton, 90 per cent of its sunflowers and 30 to 40 per cent of its groundnuts. Overall agriculture accounts for 45 per cent of Zimbabwe's exports, sustains half its industries and is the country's largest single employer. 'If ever a government has supported agriculture and local initiative, it is the present one', comments the President of the NFAZ, Robinson Gapare.

As Africa enters the 1990s, Zimbabwe's agricultural success is attracting increasing attention. Under Ian Smith's former white minority government, peasant farmers were cramped into the worst land. But the present government aims to buy unproductively used 'white' land and settle peasant farmers there. One-third of the 165,000 families originally targeted for resettlement have been moved. More will probably follow during this, Zimbabwe's tenth year of independence.



Smile of success: Mutsoto's bumper crop.

With a population growth rate of almost four per cent a year, however, resettlement is only one answer to Zimbabwe's problems. 'Of course we want land in the most productive areas,' says Gapare. 'But also training and other forms of support can make unproductive land productive.'

Zimbabwe's major departure from its neighbours – and chief incentive to its farmers – has been a consistent pricing policy. While food subsidies to urban consumers were progressively cut between 1982 and 1984, the price of maize, Zimbabwe's staple food, more than doubled over the same period. The price subsequently remained flat for three years because of a huge stockpile and low prices on the international market. But prices have since been readjusted to about

Z\$50 (US\$25) per tonne, which enables farmers to make a decent profit.

Just as important as the pricing policy has been the increase of credit. Under the former government – as in many African countries today – most peasant farmers couldn't borrow money because they didn't have collateral. Now, although most loans still go to commercial farmers, lending to peasant farmers has shot up from Z\$250,000 in 1979/80 to the present level of Z\$30 million annually.

'The main change,' says the general manager of the Agricultural Corporation which controls most loans, 'was not to insist on collateral but to give loans on the basis of viability of the programme.'

There has been another big legal change – to the position of women. In the past women were regarded as minors and could only get credit through their husbands. Today all Zimbabweans become majors at the age of 18 and women can get loans as long as they present a viable project, live on the farm and have a good knowledge of farming.

Mavis Mukwauri is one Zvimba farmer who has benefited. She, like many African women, does the farming while her husband works in town. He is a freelance painter who can't get work during the rainy season – precisely when she needs money to buy agricultural materials.

In 1986, Mukwauri suggested to her husband that they take out a loan. 'He said to me: "do whatever you can do; you are the farmer".' So she borrowed enough money to buy materials for four acres of land. That season she reaped 96 bags of maize, compared to her previous 20. Over the last two years she has increased her coverage to six acres and now averages 120 bags of maize.

Improved extension services or back-up for peasant farmers have also been vital in Zimbabwe's agricultural revolution. Before independence such services were split in two along racial lines, with most going to white commercial farmers. Since independence the services have been amalgamated and their budget tripled to 30 million Zimbabwe dollars, or 20 per cent of agriculture's total budget.

The Zimbabwean government has realized that every part of the agricultural process needed improving, from borrowing money right through to transporting the grain to market – a total package. Thus agricultural training facilities have also expanded since 1980: despite the growth in population over the period the ratio of agricultural demonstrators to farmers has been reduced from 1:1000 to 1:850. And they are making a special effort to target women farmers, who have traditionally been ignored.

'In the old days it was very difficult for me to talk to women farmers, because the men would say "look, he's trying to steal my wife",' says one agricultural demonstrator. 'Now since the Government says we are all equal, it is much easier.'

One farmer who has learned a lot from the demonstrator is Ebba Chirumanza. 'I did not understand the benefits of winter ploughing, or which type of fertilizer to use for my soil, or how to grow cash crops like cotton,' she says. And but for the demonstrator 'I would not know how to mix pesticides easily myself because I can't read the labels.'

A better network

Farmers have also been helped by the improved marketing infrastructure. Elsewhere in Africa a major impediment to commercial farming has been the deterioration of roads and railways due to budget cuts over the decade.

Zimbabwe fortunately inherited a relatively well-developed network, complemented by an efficient Grain Marketing Board. Before independence all of these facilities were geared to serving the country's white farmers. But since 1980 great efforts have been made to re-orient the facilities. Secondary and feeder roads have been built into rural areas. The number of Grain Marketing Board depots has been increased from 43 to 66 – and all the new ones are located in peasant farming districts. Eventually no small farmer will be further than 45 kilometres away from a marketing facility.

But all these efforts mean nothing if the farmers themselves do not take advantage of them. Above the mantelpiece in Dan Mutsoto's lounge a framed certificate with the National Resource Board logo takes pride of place. In fine print the certificate which bears his name makes commendation of 'his exemplary activities in water management and viable land husbandry'.

That is the secret of this remarkable

Zimbabwean peasant farmer's success. For his stony five-acre plot of land in the Chikukwa area of south-east Zimbabwe is hardly a farmer's dream. Last year the proceeds from this rough piece of ground fed Mutsoto's whole family of ten and brought in nearly Z\$1,500 in profit – almost three times the country's per capita income. 'I try to use every inch of land and use it properly,' says the middle-aged farmer, flashing a broad grin.

Initially, like most peasant farmers in Zimbabwe, Mutsoto only grew maize. But when he discovered that he could make three times the amount by growing beans, Mutsoto shifted tactics. For the last two seasons he has primarily been growing beans with just enough maize scattered in-between to feed his family.

On the other two acres of land Mutsoto is experimenting with coffee, an increasingly popular crop with peasant farmers in the mountainous regions of the country. Before the winter, Mutsoto is setting up his own irrigation scheme for the crop, using water from a mountain stream. And to capitalize on this investment, he has also decided to put in a crop of winter wheat between the coffee bushes.

Meanwhile, on a slope adjoining the farm, Mutsoto has planted 4,000 trees because he has noticed that 'my wife is having to go further and further for firewood'. Not to waste any opportunity, Mutsoto has also set up beehives among the trees. 'Next time you come,' says the amiable farmer as he serves out large chunks of maize bread, 'there will be honey to go with the meal.' □

Colleen Lowe Morna is a Zimbabwe-based freelance journalist.



The problem

Famines have always occurred in Africa but now they are more common. Quite simply Africa is not growing enough food. Part of the problem is that the best land is all too often devoted to cash crops for export – a bequest of colonialism. But post-independence African governments have also been to blame for their neglect of food-growing. All too often the vocal urban population has demanded such low food prices that farmers have had no incentive to grow more food than they needed for their own families. The result has been more food imports and, in a crisis, food aid – both of which make the prospect of self-sufficiency in food recede even further beyond the horizon.

The facts

- Around 10,000 children die a day in

Africa from causes linked to malnutrition and the lack of health care.

- About one quarter of sub-Saharan Africa's population – more than 100 million – faces chronic food shortages.
- Africa now imports around 40% of its food although in the 1950s it used to be self-sufficient.

The way forward

Africa must prioritize food production. At least a quarter of all government expenditure should go into agriculture. And governments should give peasant farmers incentives to diversify and grow more. Good prices for food crops are essential. And farmers need help to buy materials such as fertilizer and seed: these should be subsidized and loans should be more readily available to pay for them. Agricultural research needs funding so as to develop high-yield seeds that suit the African small farmer and do not cost the earth to use. And farmers must be trained in methods of intensive farming that are environmentally sustainable. Governments must put food production first.

1. The human cradle 2 million years ago

Africa was the birthplace of tool-making humans. Two million years ago they ran, hunted, made love, fashioned tools, gathered plants and died in north-western Tanzania. Among the many implements that they bequeathed us are pointed stones probably used to sharpen the tips of digging implements. A million years later our forebears emerged whose repertoire of stone tools now included hand-axes. By around 50,000 years ago our ancestors had learned to make fire and were setting up house in caves. And around 15,000 BC, Africa had begun to be populated by human beings with the same variety of racial characteristics as today.

2. Promise of the Nile

4000 BC

Out of Africa a new group of people tramped northwards to the land of Egypt. To stay or not to stay? Food was the problem. With pioneering ingenuity they solved the puzzle by becoming the world's first farmers around 4,000 BC. They split the land into two states – Upper and Lower Egypt – and after 3,200 BC one Pharaoh took charge. A stunning civilization sprang up. The elite had a strong central government which lasted for 3,000 years and perfected its techniques of extracting wealth and labour from its subjects. With this they built splendid temples and pyramids stocked with tomb-furniture so that the Pharaohs could live out their after-lives in comfort. There was brilliant development – Aristotle described Egypt as the 'cradle of mathematics' – and little disruption until a series of invasions precipitated its decline.

3. The land of Kush

500 BC

Beyond southern Egypt lay the land of Kush. It was later forgotten because the Greeks, who rarely (if ever) visited it, sweepingly referred to its inhabitants as Ethiopians – meaning all Africans. Herodotus described the place from hearsay: 'Here gold is found in great abundance and huge elephants and ebony, and all sorts of trees growing wild. The men too, are the tallest in the world, the best-looking and the longest lived.' The southern city of Meroe became one of the the greatest iron-founding centres of the ancient world after 500 BC. Its inhabitants – who apparently had a better geographical sense than the Greeks – developed a roaring trade with India and China, while building temples and manufacturing metals. And by 250 BC the region had a large and powerful empire which lasted until the fourth century AD.

4. The Ethiopians

500 BC

While Kush was growing, another civilization was flowering in north-eastern Ethiopia. This Ethiopian culture borrowed its language and gods from the southern Arabians or Sabeans (the Queen of Sheba's people) with whom they originally traded. The city of Adulis blossomed as a centre of world trade and soon after AD 50, the Ethiopian capital, Axum, produced a new line of kings. They had the same weakness for self-aggrandizement as some modern heads of state and competed to erect ever-bigger monuments. Finally in AD 500 and after centuries of trading, King Ezana of Axum decided that he had been provoked beyond endurance and marched his armies into Meroe. Meroe's downfall was complete.

5. The lords of Ghana

600 AD

Ghana – whose markets had supplied the Berbers since ancient times – grew into a big and powerful empire, built on the North African hunger for gold and ivory and the West African hunger for salt. Gradually it began trading in more things: copper, cotton, fine tools and swords from Arabian workshops; horses from Barbary and Egypt; ivory, kola nuts and slaves from the south. The lords of Ghana raked in massive sums by taxing both production and the import-export trade. They behaved like modern-day pop stars, squandering the money on lavish banquets for thousands of guests at a time. Their extravagance became renowned, peaking around 1067. It attracted Berber invaders who stole the wealth and forced many inhabitants to become Muslims. Weakened by these raids, the empire finally fell to an invading people from the north of Senegal, the Tekrur.

The History

Traditional history teaching gave a monopoly of 'greatness' to Western societies. But long before Europeans pillaged Africa the conti-



of Africa

ment produced an imposing array of civilizations. This history is the bedrock upon which Africa must build its future.



6. Mali and Songhay

1200

Ghana split into several states, as oppressed groups freed themselves. Among these groups were the Mandinka who inhabited the state of Kangaba on the banks of the Upper Niger. They were excellent traders and cultivators whose leaders fought vigorously to build the empire of Mali, which rose in the thirteenth century and lasted for nearly 200 years. By the end, the empire sprawled from the shores of the Atlantic to the borders of modern Nigeria. Mali's schools of theology and law were famous as far away as Muslim Asia. And its heyday was revered as a golden age – until 1375, when the Songhay rulers of the city-state of Gao rebelled. From 1464 the Songhay set about conquering Mali. They succeeded and set up their own empire which grew for another century, stretching across the vast region of the Middle Niger.

7. Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe

1400

By 1400, the Iron Age was shaping people's consciousness all across sub-Saharan Africa. States rose and fell. The Swahili peoples had long conducted trade between Africans from the interior and ships from China and India; their buildings expressed the Arab-African influence. Further south was the kingdom between the Limpopo and the Zambezi called Great Zimbabwe. The ambitious Mutota, king of the Karanga, conquered this gold-rich plateau in around 1440 and a new civilization emerged. As well as large buildings the people made beautiful gold objects and fine hand-turned pots. But the empire was torn by internal rivalries, and fell to the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century.

8. Military might

1500

By now Europeans were trading up and down the coast of West Africa. They influenced the coastal people who must have been amazed by their seemingly insatiable desire for gold. But the African states were too strong to be invaded. The Wolof empire in Senegal commanded a cavalry of 10,000 and an army of 100,000. The powerful empire of Benin was growing famous for its ivory and bronze sculptures. Mali was still respected. And inland states continued developing undisturbed. For example the Yoruba of Oyo became a formidable force after their Alafin or king was exiled by a neighbouring state. When the Yoruba returned they organized a cavalry-based army which made them unconquerable in the region for nearly 200 years. But the real African genius lay not in military strength or empires but in its system of decentralized societies run by village chiefs and elders. All across Africa from the Ibo in the West to the Kikuyu in the East and the Xhosa in the South, this was the way societies operated.

9. Slaves

1650

Traditionally in Africa, prisoners of war and convicts could be made into slaves, so fortune-seeking African rulers had no qualms about selling a few slaves to the Portuguese in exchange for cotton, woollens or brass. But the discovery of America caused a labour hunger among Europeans that could not be satisfied by a mere human trickle. Africans were kidnapped on a massive scale and transported to the Americas for work on plantations or down mines. African slaves were prized because of their skills in tropical farming and metal working and by 1780 around 100,000 were being shipped across the Atlantic every year. So many died in the process that entire slave populations had to be replaced every few years. And many African communities were decimated. Their industries and fine cities, beautiful temples and skilful works of art, all bled to death as young men and women, the most productive and creative of their citizens, were dragged away.

10. Conquest and colonialism

1700

Europeans began thoroughly exploring Africa after 1795. Invasions followed between 1880 and 1900. The conquering powers divided up their spoils. They imposed colonial boundaries which split some ethnic groups and locked others together. They disrupted traditional systems of government by imposing taxes and appointing subjected chiefs to administrate for them. They flooded Africa with cheap industrial goods like cottons, metalwares and firearms – inhibiting local production and industrial expansion. They traded drink which brought alcoholism. And they discouraged local food production by promoting cash crops like peanuts, cocoa and bananas, while cultivating markets for imported foods such as sugar. Africa was ensnared in the web of exploitation which still confines it.

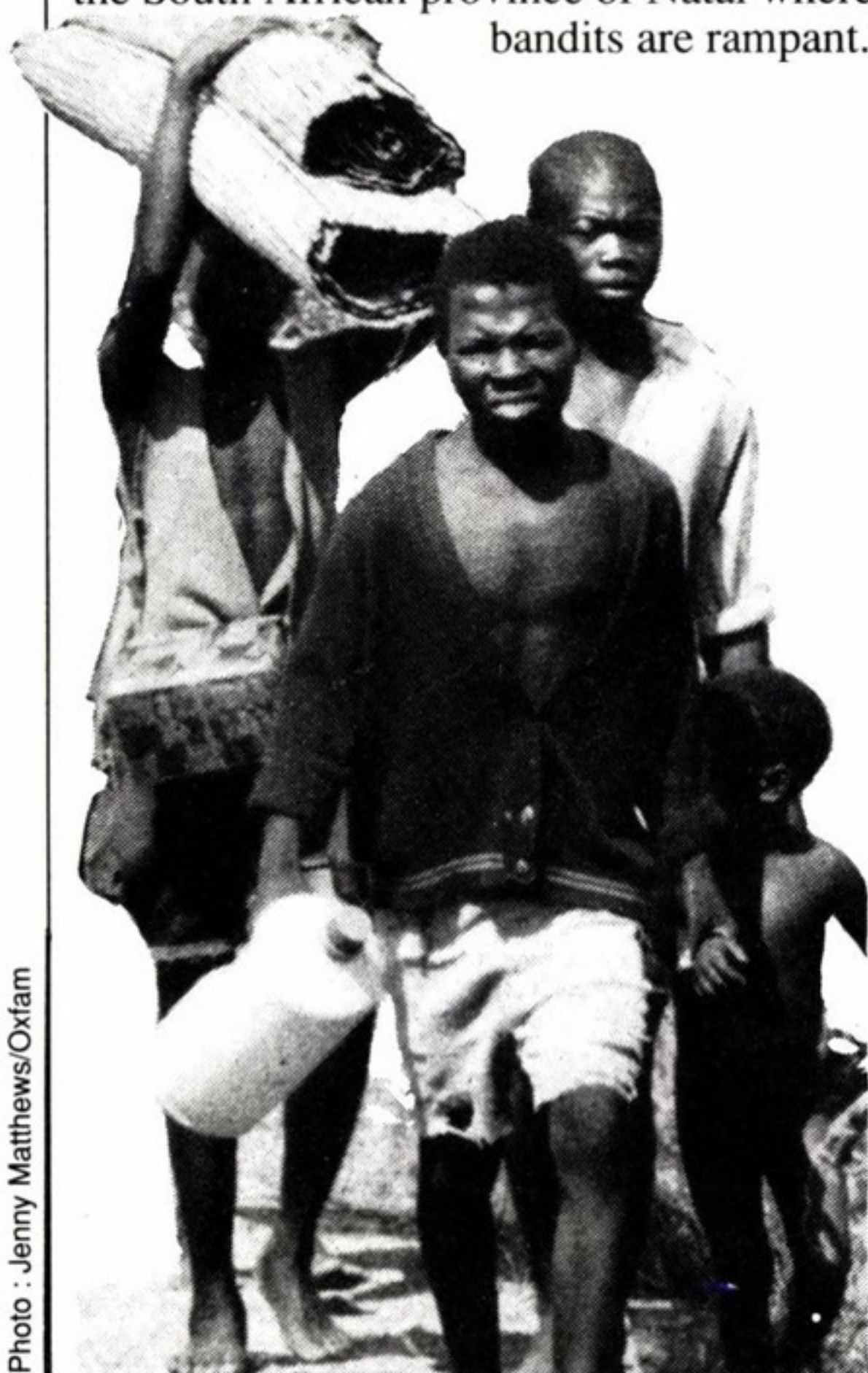


The road to USSA

Once apartheid is gone, what then? Mozambican journalist Carlos Cardoso puts the case for a United States of Southern Africa.

I WAS overjoyed when South Africa unbanned the African National Congress – which has spearheaded the struggle against apartheid – and released Mr Nelson Mandela. But I also felt wary. The end of apartheid may be in sight but Southern Africa as a whole faces many dangers amid the turmoils of transition to a new South Africa. Not least, there is the serious possibility of total disintegration in the region.

Already in Mozambique, the South African-sponsored Renamo forces have left such wanton destruction that entire areas have returned to warlords. The central government has little or no power in regions where these chiefs now prevail. Neither has Renamo. The same is true in the South African province of Natal where bandits are rampant.



Refugees fleeing from Renamo's attacks.

This kind of fragmentation could become commonplace since South Africa itself is a hotch-potch of peoples divided by traditional customs which have been maintained by whites through the process of divide and rule.

South Africa's economy is the backbone of the region and, if it collapsed, Southern Africa would plunge into decades of escalating famine and poverty as nations reconsolidated. The borders established in Berlin during 1885 would dissipate as Zulu, Shangaan and the other old nations surfaced – and the Afrikaner ultra-right tried to recreate the old Boer republics.

There is another worry also. When apartheid is formally pronounced dead, Southern Africa will open its doors to South Africa enabling that country's ruling class to consolidate its alliance with the region's elites. This is already happening. But if South Africa tries to retain its economic ascendancy – or to monopolize the decision-making processes throughout the region – conditions will be ripe for more war.

The future of all Southern Africa therefore depends on our coming up with regional mechanisms to stop these things happening. Integration, in my opinion, is the only way to guarantee collective independence and avoid a violent future relationship between South and Southern Africa.

Southern Africa should form a federation of nations guided by a regional parliament, with the aim of establishing political, economic and social democracy throughout the entire region. Its inhabitants would enjoy dual citizenship – both

national and Southern African.

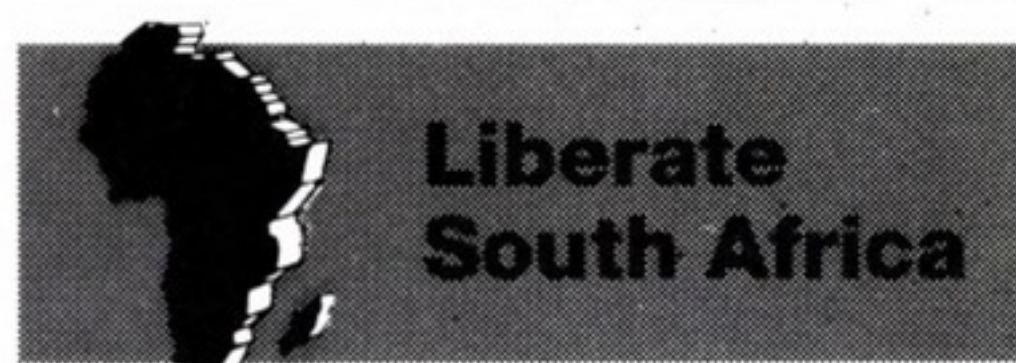
The political maturity of the frontline states makes integration eminently feasible. So do the ten years of accumulated knowledge on economic co-operation, achieved through the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Moreover millions of Southern Africans are already knitted together by extended family ties, giving the region a natural unity to be capitalized upon.

This integrated Southern Africa would need its own army. Over the past 500 years Europe and North America's behaviour on the world stage has been very violent. Much of Renamo's support comes from West Germany and Portugal. And Western arms spending suggests that it seeks a few more centuries of world centrality. Everyone hopes this will not be so but, just in case, Southern Africa should have the military muscle to keep future would-be aggressors at bay and to defend its economic and natural riches – which will undoubtedly be in demand. It should therefore have both national armies and a regional force operating under the jurisdiction of the regional parliament.

Naturally this could only happen in the context of serious negotiations to end apartheid. It would require South Africa's state-owned armaments corporation, ARMSCOR, to be democratically owned by SADCC member states. Arms production would be regionally decentralized so that no single country could wield a military upper hand.

With the industrial and technological prowess of an intact post-apartheid South Africa at its heart, Southern Africa would stand a good chance of helping to fashion a more just North-South relationship. That purpose could engage several generations. And it is the direction we must travel in – or Southern Africa will be no more than a footnote of the 21st century. □

Carlos Cardoso works for the Mozambique News Agency in Maputo.



The problem

South Africa's apartheid system drains human and economic resources from all Southern Africa. Frontline states spend vast amounts defending themselves against South Africa. Exports slump and import costs rise as transport routes are disrupted and new ones built to avoid war zones. Thousands of people are dead, homeless or mutilated. Education and healthcare have been ravaged. And famine has come to the region.

The facts

- South Africa's destabilization programme costs the Frontline States around 25% to 40% of their Gross Domestic Product annually.
- Destabilization has displaced up to seven million people during the 1980s.

The way forward

Apartheid must give way to black majority rule in South Africa through a negotiated settlement. All of Southern Africa should benefit from the increased resources made available through South Africa's highly developed industry and agriculture. Regional co-operation throughout Southern Africa is the best way to prevent war and develop the region for the benefit of all.



Hope – at long last

Slowly and painfully Ugandans are rebuilding a country devastated by war, tyranny and AIDS. Catharine Watson explains how ordinary people have taken control.

LWEMWEDDE village is hidden in the forest. Elephant grass has choked the track to it ever since the army of former president Milton Obote killed around 300,000 people between 1981 and 1986 in this region of Central Uganda. When the war ended, piles of bones sat along each road.

Obote's rampage followed an election which he lost despite using soldiers to intimidate voters and switch ballots. He seized power by force and set out to purge the guerilla force called the National Resistance Army, led by Yoweri Museveni. This army had helped overthrow the notorious dictator Idi Amin with the aim of achieving democracy.

But it had a different vision of democracy. Previous attempts at Western-style democracy had sunk into a mire of corruption and lack of accountability. So whenever Museveni's guerillas liberated an area they set out to replace political parties with resistance councils and committees accountable to the people.

The new structures caught on and they were the basis on which the war was fought, dismantling forms of state authority at the rural level and replacing them with new forms of popular power.

In January 1986 the National Resistance Army won the war. Museveni became President. And, ever since, the resistance committees have flourished.

The system is like a pyramid. Each committee or council is represented up to parish and sub-county level. From here representatives are elected onto the National Resistance Council (NRC) which functions as a parliament.

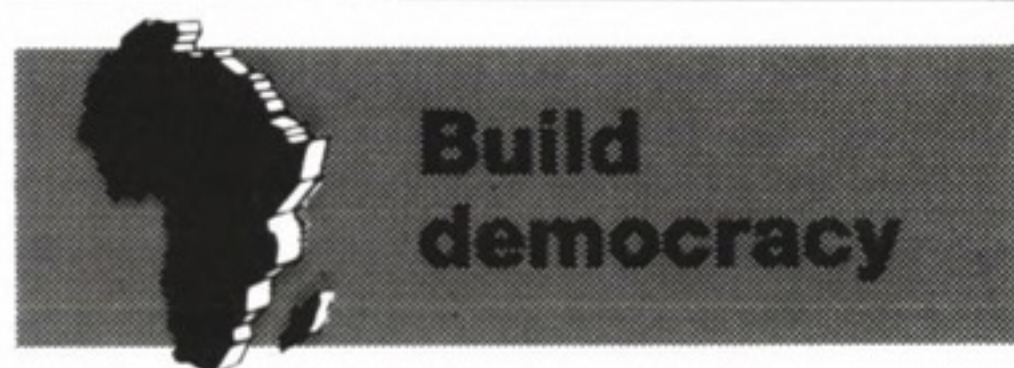
The Government has no power over who is on the NRC. The only condition for election is that a person is over 18 and has not been involved in Amin's or Obote's intelligence and torture agencies. Even Museveni's opponents can sit on the Council and hold senior positions. But if representatives misbehave, they can be removed by a vote of no confidence.

Slowly the resistance committees and councils are reversing the anti-democratic trends of the last 20 years.

Most of the local committees' time is



A Ugandan soldier finds better use for arms.



The problem

National democracy scarcely exists in Africa. Governments use patronage rather than procedures to stay in power. And individuals shelter from the state behind personal networks of influence. There is often no free press. And voluntary organizations are either co-opted by the powerful or disbanded. Most people cannot participate in political processes because of poverty, poor education or coercion. And where elections do prompt change, the resulting conflict frequently ends in a military coup.

The facts

- Out of 45 black African nations only

spent on judicial work. This is immensely popular with ordinary Ugandans because in the past justice was only for those with money. Now resistance committees judge cases of assault, criminal damage, land, paternity and inheritance disputes.

The committees even intervened when the National Resistance Army was itself guilty of some gruesome human-rights abuses. Now the army can only make sweeps against rebels with the committees' go-ahead. This civilian control over soldiers is revolutionary in a country which covered under the rule of the gun for 15 years.

In Mbale, committees have arrested corrupt co-operative officials, summoned bank managers and magistrates to explain lapses in duty and arrested soldiers who have taken bribes.

The system is not perfect. In Tororo and Inganga Catholics who suffered under local despots have taken over the committees and 'revenged' themselves on Protestants by arranging their arrest. The committees haven't stopped Karimojong warriors raiding cattle. Nor have they liberated women – or often sided with them. They have not made poor people rich.

But the committees have great popular support. Officials are unpaid. And although hundreds have been killed by rebels loyal to Obote, Amin and the charismatic Alice Lakwena and her Holy Spirit movement, committees are still working bravely on in rebel zones. 'They are the means by which we can pull this nation up from the days of terror,' says one official in downtown Kampala.

These small democratic structures are quietly changing a country that has suffered unparalleled economic, social and moral collapse. Progress is bound to be slow. But it is coming. □

Catharine Watson is a Uganda-based freelance journalist and co-author of *Aid, Rhetoric and Reality* (Pluto Press 1985).

five – Botswana, the Gambia, Mauritius, Namibia and Senegal – are multi-party democracies. Twenty-three are military dictatorships. The rest are one-party states.

- During the last 30 years there have been 'successful' coups in over 25 African countries.

The way forward

Development should go hand in hand with democracy – ordinary people must participate in decision-making processes at all levels. Co-operatives and peasant farmers' groups must be encouraged. And local methods of co-operation should be strengthened. The right to organize politically is essential. So is a free press. The two countries with the best economic performances in Africa – Botswana and Mauritius – both have free presses.

AFRICA - THE FACTS

MOST AFRICANS are as poor today as they were 30 years ago - and getting poorer.¹ Famines, droughts and wars are commonplace. And before a route out of the crisis can be plotted the bare facts need to be stared in the face.

CREEPING DESERT

Around 650 million square kilometres of farming land in sub-Saharan Africa have become desert in the last 50 years - and the process is accelerating. And more than 10 million people have been forced to leave home as a result of desertification.²

Rural populations affected by severe desertification³

Sahel - 27.5 million



Africa South of the Sahel - 25.0 million



Mediterranean Africa - 8.5 million



GRINDING POVERTY⁴

Of the 20 poorest countries in the world, 14 are from sub-Saharan Africa. And at least half of these have gone backwards economically since 1965.

Africa's poorest countries⁵

	place among world's poorest	GNP per capita 1987 (in US dollars)	average annual economic growth 1965-87
1. Ethiopia	(1)	130	0.1%
2. Chad	(3)	150	-2.0%
3. Zaire	(4)	150	2.4%
4. Malawi	(6)	160	1.4%
5. Mozambique	(9)	170	-
6. Tanzania	(10)	180	-4.0%
7. Burkina Faso	(11)	190	1.6%
8. Madagascar	(12)	210	-1.8%
9. Mali	(13)	210	-
10. Burundi	(14)	250	1.6%
11. Zambia	(15)	250	-2.1%
12. Niger	(16)	260	-2.2%
13. Uganda	(17)	260	-2.7%
14. Togo	(20)	290	0.0

PLUMMETING PRICES

The prices Africa gets for its primary products have slumped sharply in real terms during the 1980s while the prices it has to pay for goods from the West have continued to rise.



MILITARY MADNESS

Between 1945 and 1989 sub-Saharan Africa saw at least 30 major military conflicts. Most of the world's military-controlled governments are found in this region.

Military spending

Five of Africa's poorest countries increased their spending on the military between 1972 and 1987 while cutting their spending on social welfare.⁶

	Defence		Housing, amenities, social services and welfare	
	1972	1987	1972	1987
Malawi	3.1	6.6	5.8	2.3
Tanzania	11.9	15.8	2.1	1.7
Uganda	23.1	26.3	7.3	2.9
Kenya	6.0	9.1	3.9	1.7
Liberia	5.3	8.9	3.5	1.9



Wars in Sub-Saharan Africa 1945 - 1989

Angola 1961-75, 1975-89
Burundi 1973, 1988
Cameroon 1955-60
Chad 1963-67
Ethiopia 1974-89, 1976-83
Ghana 1981
Guinea-Bissau 1962-74
Kenya 1952-63
Madagascar 1947-48
Mozambique 1965-75, 1981-89
Nigeria 1967-70, 1980-81, 1984
Rwanda 1956-65
Somalia 1988
Sudan 1963-72, 1984-89
Uganda 1966, 1971-78, 1978-79, 1981-87
West Sahara 1975-87
Zaire 1960-65
Zambia 1964
Zimbabwe 1972-79, 1983

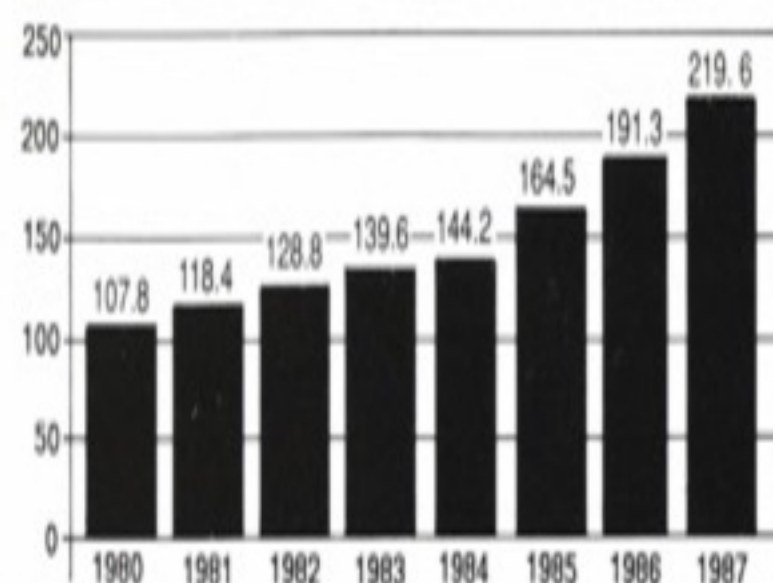


1 Sub-Saharan Africa From Crisis to Sustainable Development, World Bank 1989. 2 State of the World's Population 1988, UNFPA. 3 World Development Report 1989, World Bank. 4 A Fate Worse than Debt, Susan George (Pelican 1988). 5 Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics, UNCTAD 1988. 6 World Debt Tables, World Bank 1988-9. 7 Africa: What Can Be Done, Ben Turok (Zed 1987). 8 State of the World, Brown and Wolf 1985. 9 Women of the World - An International Atlas, Joni Seagar and Ann Olson (Pan 1986). 10 Women: Key to African Food Security, FAO 1988. 11 World Military and Social Expenditures, Ruth Leger Sivard (World Priorities 1989).

DOMINATING DEBTS

Sub-Saharan Africa's total debt increased from about 6 billion dollars in 1970 to 134 billion dollars in 1988. By 1988 the total debt was equal to the region's Gross National Product and three and a half times its export earnings.⁷ Those countries with the largest debts in Black Africa are Nigeria, the Sudan and Ivory Coast⁸.

This table shows the increase in Africa's total debt between 1980 and 1987. Figures are in \$US billion.



DESPERATE DEPENDENCE

Africa contributes only four per cent to the annual volume of world trade⁹. Yet African economies often depend heavily on the trade of a single commodity for their foreign exchange.

The following table shows those countries which depended on one agricultural commodity for 40 per cent or more of their total export earnings in 1987¹⁰.

Country	Commodity	Percentage of export earnings
Rwanda	Coffee	69.2%
Malawi	Tobacco	64.2%
Ethiopia	Coffee	50.5%
Ghana	Cocoa	46.4%
Burundi	Coffee	41.8%
Benin	Cotton	40.5%
Gambia	Ground nuts	40%



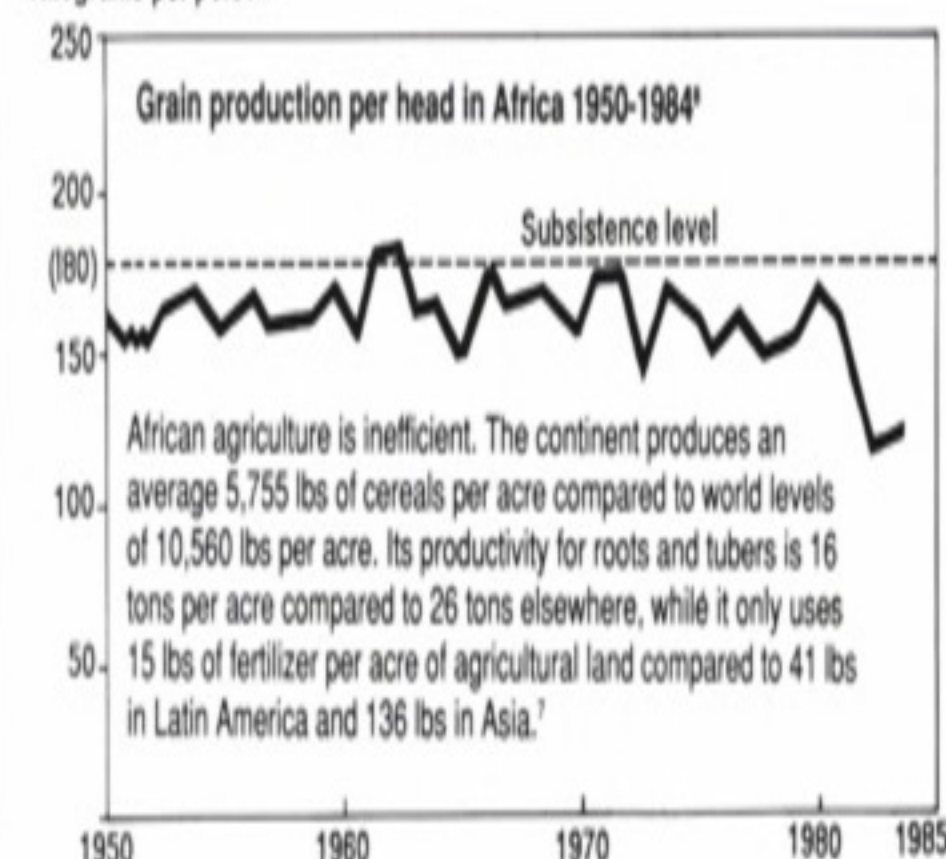
WEARY WOMEN

● Women do 75% of Africa's agricultural work and 95% of the domestic work¹¹
● In Mozambique 90% of women are engaged in food production¹²
● African women do 70% of hoeing and weeding, 60% of harvesting, 50% of planting, 60% of marketing, 90% of food processing and 80% of transporting crops home and storing them.¹³



UNPRODUCTIVE FARMING

Kilograms per person



African agriculture is inefficient. The continent produces an average 5,755 lbs of cereals per acre compared to world levels of 10,560 lbs per acre. Its productivity for roots and tubers is 16 tons per acre compared to 26 tons elsewhere, while it only uses 15 lbs of fertilizer per acre of agricultural land compared to 41 lbs in Latin America and 136 lbs in Asia.¹⁴



Zaire's den of thieves

Whew! It stinks. Steve Askin takes the lid off one of the most rotten regimes in the world.

ON a summer day an air-conditioned luxury bus wends its way along Portugal's southern coast. Impeccably dressed in custom-tailored silk, Mobutu Sese Seko, President of Zaire, peers intently through a window, surveying the crystal-blue sea, fashionable resorts and luxuriant vineyards. 'Halt!' he orders. The man who rules 35 million of the world's poorest people has found himself another property to buy in the Algarve.

When Portugal caught Mobutu's fancy in 1984 he started regularly jetting into Lisbon and touring the countryside with swarms of friends and retainers. In a single month he spent over three million dollars on Portuguese investments including a 15-acre beach resort and a plantation of orchards and vineyards in the far north. He hosted convivial dinners for his friends – including Portugal's President and Prime Minister – entertaining them with his encyclopaedic knowledge of gastronomy, wine and 'beautiful things'.

More recently Mobutu has begun conducting official business from the ancient village of Roquebrune near Monte Carlo. Last October, French police obligingly sealed off the road to his beachfront

property for a succession of official guests including US Africa policy chief Herman Cohen, Angolan and South African foreign ministers, US Congresspeople and Israeli investors. During Zaire's critically important negotiations with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), even Zairean government officials flew to Roquebrune to brief their president. Mobutu's long-time friend Adnan Khashoggi, the Saudi billionaire arms merchant who has been charged in the US with helping Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos loot the Philippines, has a conveniently located home nearby.

When Mobutu tires of Europe, luxury homes await him in each Zairean province. Up to four months a year he lives at his family's ancestral village of Gbadolite near the Central African Republic border. He lengthened the Gbadolite airport runway a few years ago, officially for 'security reasons' but actually so the supersonic Concorde he charts from Air France can land there.

Critics peg Mobutu's fortune at five

billion dollars. Mobutu himself insists it totals 'less than \$50 million', but confidential financial reports suggest that Mobutu receives almost \$100 million a year directly from his government to spend as he sees fit. This is more than the Government spends on education, health and all other social services combined.

Foreign friends helped Mobutu become a millionaire almost 30 years ago. His first few million dollars came from the US Central Intelligence Agency and from a United Nations peacekeeping force in the early 1960s, even before he seized power in 1965. By the mid-1970s, the CIA alone had paid Mobutu more than \$150 million, according to Roger Morris, a former aide to Henry Kissinger.

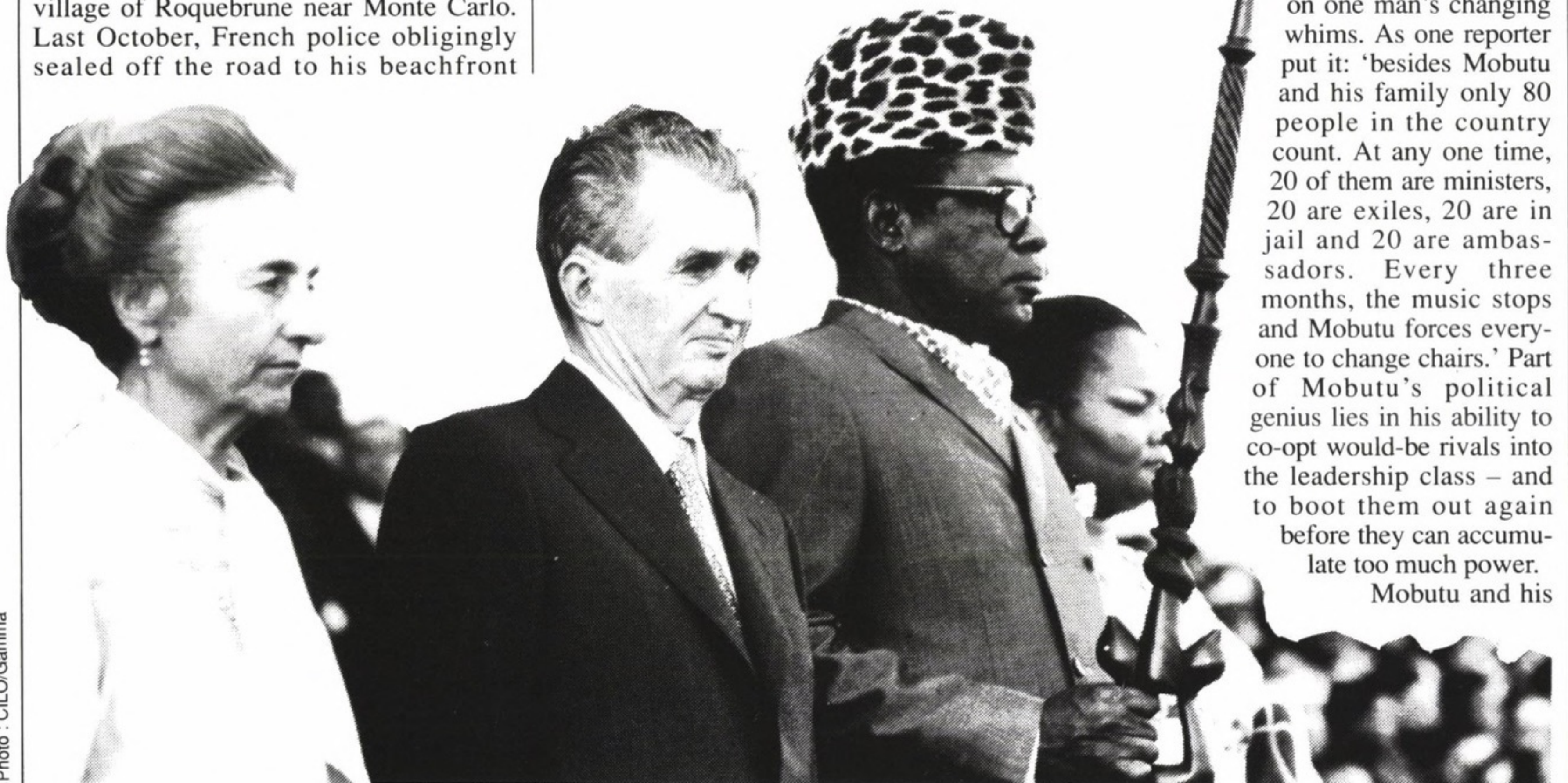
Mobutu accumulates wealth for personal consumption and to fund international and domestic patronage networks. Just as nineteenth-century Belgian colonizers bought the support of Congolese chiefs and village headmen, Mobutu has purchased a stable of reliable overseas retainers, especially in the former colonial power, Belgium. Belgian politicians paid by Mobutu have included a former Prime Minister, the one-time leader of the Christian Democratic party and top civil servants in the foreign ministry.

An ever-changing team of 'registered agents' serve as Mobutu's official lobbyists in the US. Some of Washington's most respected influence peddlers have performed this role, alongside various shadier but equally well-connected operators like a Khashoggi brother-in-law.

Like a European feudal king surrounded by nobles, Mobutu also dispenses vast sums as patronage to his own elite in

Zaire. Unlike an aristocracy, this elite depends for its status on one man's changing whims. As one reporter put it: 'besides Mobutu and his family only 80 people in the country count. At any one time, 20 of them are ministers, 20 are exiles, 20 are in jail and 20 are ambassadors. Every three months, the music stops and Mobutu forces everyone to change chairs.' Part of Mobutu's political genius lies in his ability to co-opt would-be rivals into the leadership class – and to boot them out again before they can accumulate too much power.

Mobutu and his



The Ceaucescus were just two of Mobutu's foreign friends who included a Prime Minister, the CIA and arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi.

inner circle sit atop a social ladder of corruption. Everyone is forced to take from those less powerful, both to survive and to meet the demands of more powerful people above. Almost all of Zaire's wealth stays on the upper rungs, in the hands of powerful politicians and politically-connected businessmen. The enduring symbol of this social stratum is the Mercedes-Benz. Zaire reputedly imports more Mercedes than anywhere in Africa and Kinshasa's Mercedes dealers prosper while all around them crumbles.

The Mercedes-riding class have made smuggling and black-marketeering Zaire's leading industries. By paying bribes to customs agents instead of taxes to the Government, they have elevated illegal gold exports to 'several times the (official) national production,' according to a confidential World Bank report. While discreetly avoiding identification of the culprits, the World Bank also notes that theft and smuggling of Zaire's most vital strategic mineral, cobalt, 'is primarily carried out by some of the most powerful individuals in the country'.

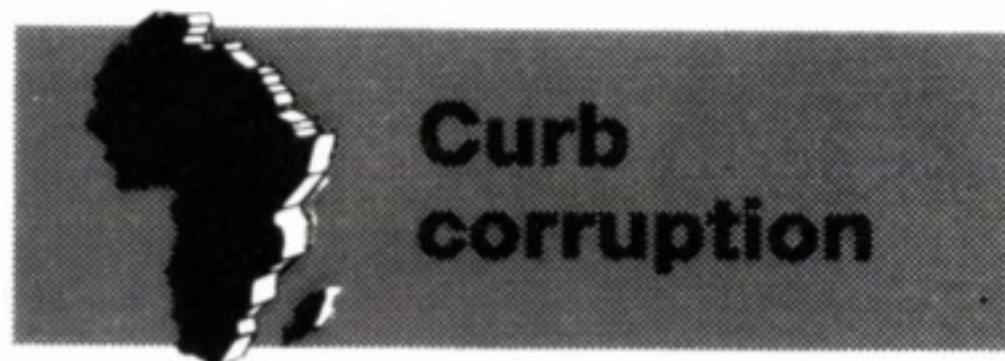
Civil servants may wield considerable power while receiving absurdly low salaries. Often the struggle to survive can compel well-intentioned officials to abandon deeply held principles.

One evening over dinner a demoralized judge in Kisangani described his unhappy compromise with economic reality. The judge's tiny salary could not even pay his family's food bill. 'I'm not going to live in a shack,' the official said shamefacedly. 'I know if a case comes before me and the merits go against a powerful commercial person I would be punished for ruling against him and he would get his way anyhow. So I take money and I rule in his favour.'

'Smuggling, barter ... speculation and middleman activity, theft, usury, corruption and embezzlement, and extortion' are more important than formal employment as an income source for urban families, according to a World Bank study. But only those with connections near the top of the political ladder can earn enough from these pursuits to live in comfort.

Foreign visitors often mistakenly blame corruption on customs officers, police and other petty officials who demand small bribes. But most Zairean civil servants are victims of a system they don't control. They earn the equivalent of about \$20 or \$30 a month and these pathetic salaries often fail to arrive on time. They are forced to demand private payment to perform public services.

Rather than blaming these victims, it makes more sense to view bribes demanded by hard-working teachers, nurses and other social-service workers as a kind of unofficial 'tax' levied to support services which would otherwise die of state neglect. Unfortunately civil servants can take most easily from people poorer than themselves.



The problem

Corruption is endemic in Africa. It operates at all levels of society, but governments play for bigger stakes with less chance of getting caught. IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes have given corrupt officials a great break. Projects frequently don't need to be completed or accounted for, so the money vanishes



Africa's Napoleon: Jean Bedel Bokassa, ruler of the Central African Republic between 1966 and 1979, spent millions of aid dollars on self-glorifying show.

The unofficial tax begins before birth when nurses and midwives in state clinics demand payments from mothers-to-be. And not even death provides respite, as an Irish Catholic missionary discovered the day that a corpse and the bereaved family arrived eight hours late for a funeral he was to conduct. The family had been forced to spend the day raising money to pay a bribe demanded by the driver of the state-owned hearse. 'Respect for the dead is the most African of values,' said the priest. 'When that disappears, the whole social order has collapsed.'

The real culprits are the foreign powers, and especially the US, which has kept Mobutu in power for 25 years. He has served their interests by making Zaire the most important staging ground for Western military intervention in Central and Southern Africa. Secret files of the IMF and World Bank are full of reports on corruption at the top in Zaire and suffering at the bottom.

These records describe how much of the money lent to Zaire by multilateral institutions and Western governments over the past quarter-century was squandered or siphoned off. Despite their secret knowledge, these same institutions persist in demanding that Zaire pays off its foreign debt of eight billion dollars by

overseas – this is known as capital flight.

Overseas aid is regularly siphoned into foreign bank accounts, while food aid liberates governments from the responsibility of feeding their people, enabling them to do other things with their money – like bolstering their armies. And further down the social and political ladder, the flowering of bureaucracies and administrative regulations have brought innumerable opportunities for civil servants to line their pockets with bribes.

The facts

- Between 1976 and 1986, an estimated \$10 billion left Nigeria in capital flight.
- Liberia was forced into bankruptcy in 1986 due to corruption, unrestrained government spending and the squandering of over \$375 million of US aid.

The way forward

The West should only give aid to African countries prepared to show how the money will benefit ordinary people. Strict conditions should be attached – like the publication of all business accounts, and ceilings on military spending. The eradication of many African administrative regulations would wipe out opportunities for bribery and corruption. And African governments should be made accountable to their people. Aid might be channelled through grassroots organizations to ensure that it reached those most in need. Voluntary groups everywhere should lobby for all aid packages to be subject to public scrutiny. And donor governments should prosecute home firms that pay bribes to get business in Africa.

accepting economic austerity programs. These would involve further cutting an already disastrously underfunded public sector and would hit the poor hardest

The West has economic as well as military interests in Zaire. In the early years of Mobutu's regime investors from the US and other Western nations profited enormously from a multi-billion-dollar investment and construction boom funded by foreign loans. Foreign investment ground to a virtual halt after the near collapse of the Zairean economy in the mid-1970s. But the loans which paid for that investment remain to be paid.

Zaire's top-level corruption binds these foreign creditors ever closer to Mobutu because, should the Zairean people ever elect a democratic government, there would be enormous pressure to repudiate Zaire's outstanding loans. Instead of demanding austerity from the poor, the foreign lenders would be told that if they wanted their money back they should seize Mobutu's luxurious foreign estates and bulging bank accounts. And that would be a messy business. □

This article is adapted from Steve Askin's forthcoming book on Zaire under Mobutu which will be published by Zed Books. Askin is a Zimbabwe-based researcher and journalist.

Simply...

AFRICAN ECOLOGY

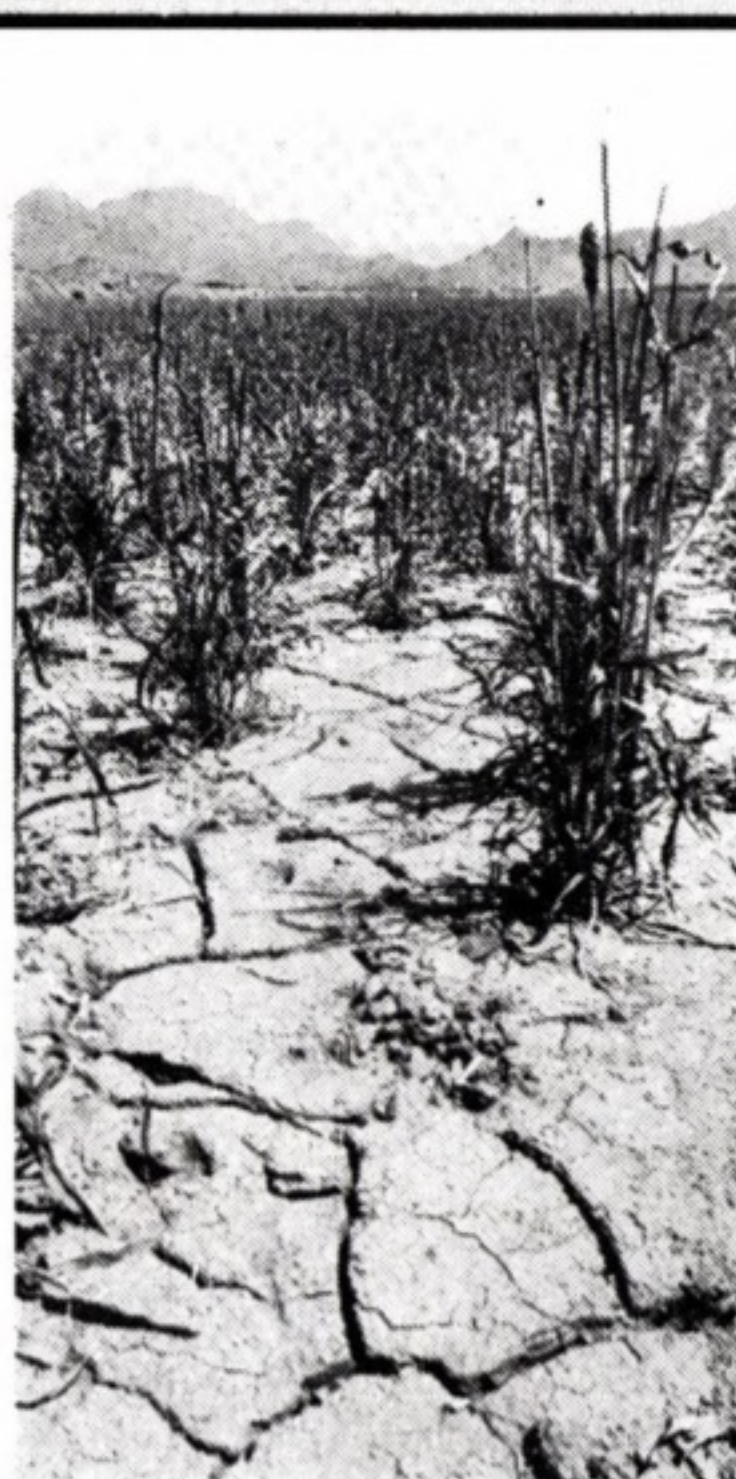
Africa's environment is trapped in a cycle of destruction. But there are ways to break it.

1. Unreliable rain

Sometimes it rains for days in Africa, sweeping away topsoil and much else besides. But often the rains don't come and droughts scorch the earth. Climates vary within miles of each other. About two-thirds of Africa is drought-prone – an area getting bigger because vast tracts of forest and vegetation are being removed by farmers, grazing cattle, fuelwood seekers and drought itself. When vegetation goes, the air

dries out. The earth's surface becomes paler, making it overheat and bringing more drought.

Planting crops with low water-consumption is one way of combatting the problem. Planting the right kind of trees and protecting vegetation – thereby increasing moisture in the air – is another. And traditional water-harvesting techniques can help. In Burkina Faso, for instance, rain water is collected on lines of stones which also act as windbreaks and protect the topsoil.



2. Sensitive soil

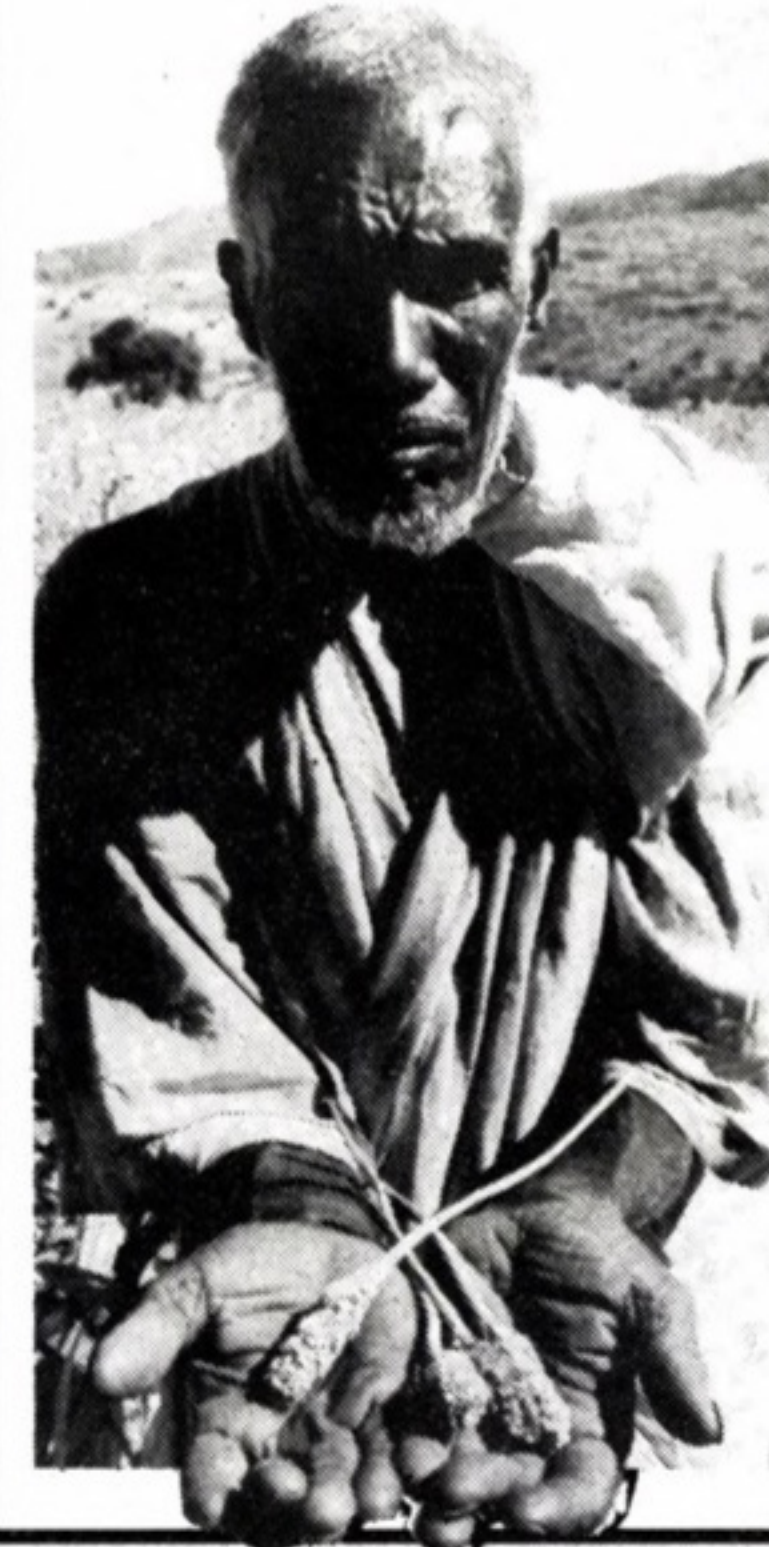
Much of Africa's soil is infertile, largely due to the extremes of climate. Heavy rains leach out nutrients and wash the topsoil away. Winds whisk off soil particles. And heat breaks down organic matter so fast that it renders the earth moribund. When the plants and trees have gone, the land is even more exposed to wind, rain and sun.

Each region has to be understood separately. But in general planting appropriate trees and vegetation helps protect Africa's soils: their roots allow rain to filter into the earth, keeping it moist and binding it together. Traditional farming methods are sometimes very sensitive to Africa's soils and varied climate – they could be developed if more money was put into local agricultural research. And longer fallow periods and crop rotation would help the soil recover from intense farming.

3. Population pressure

Africa is underpopulated in proportion to its size, and food production is increasing. But in some regions fertile land is too scarce to support the burgeoning population. Poor people's desperate search for grazing and fuelwood puts great strain on the environment.

The poor tend to have more children because they know that some will die young – and in the absence of a welfare system they need their children to tend them in old age. But at the same time few women can get hold of – or even know about – contraception. So a two-pronged attack is needed if population growth is to be reduced. The number of babies born in Africa would be cut by 27 per cent if all the women who wanted family planning had access to it. But winning the battle against poverty and child mortality would be the surest contraceptive.



4. Inappropriate technology

Africa is littered with useless equipment imported from the West, and development projects which have been abandoned because they did not meet local needs. Bulldozers rust because foreign aid was cut off before spare parts arrived. Imported chemical fertilizers are expensive and sometimes reduce soil fertility. Large-scale projects generate management problems and are costly.

Western technology cannot

respond to the diversity of Africa's environment. And it destroys traditional ways of doing things which can be better. The ox-plough is cheaper and less likely to go wrong than a tractor; it can be more appropriate. Some African farmers automatically use cow dung as a very effective fertilizer. And in south-east Nigeria forest farmers traditionally grow crops in a sustainable way to mimic the rainforest around them. Locally controlled research should be allowed to arrive at local solutions.



5. Reduced fallow

Shifting agriculture is common in Africa. Farmers burn bush to release land for growing crops. They move on once yields start to shrink after two or three years. Left to itself, nature has time to replenish the soil. But today in some places population pressure is so great that the land does not have time to recover. Few fertilizers are used. And bush-burning destroys nitrogen in the soil.

African farmers must be encouraged to farm in sustainable ways. Governments and peasants must work together to help peasants organize, gain management knowledge and build up both capital and power. Above all, farmers need incentives to use their land more efficiently. Farming subsidies, training programmes and guaranteed prices would help. So would labour-saving devices. African governments have limited control because they are so hemmed in by falling commodity prices and 'adjustment programmes' imposed by the International Monetary Fund. But their aim should be to make efficient land-use a priority.

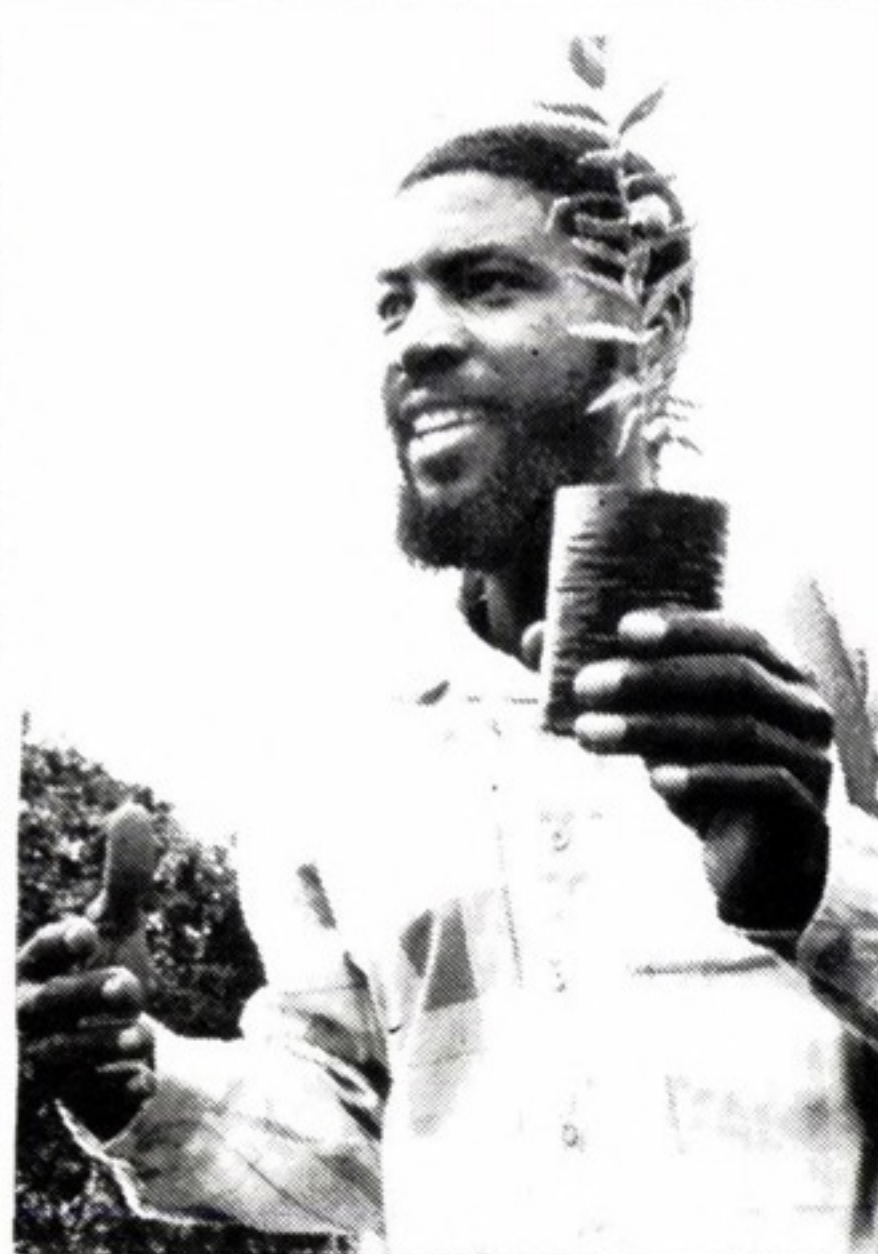


6. Land insecurity

Insecurity of land tenure is common in parts of Africa – especially where there are many refugees. Traditional communal land ownership – common before colonial times – used to give farmers great security. But this has changed. In some places private ownership is becoming more prevalent allowing farmers to be bought out. Elsewhere land has been taken over by the state. Farmers don't know if they will be farming the same region in a few years time and so they don't

invest in it – either by planting trees or conserving the soil. Women grow most of the food. But often they have no land rights of their own. If they get divorced they can be left landless. Their husbands make most of the decisions about what crops are planted and reap the benefits to spend as they will.

African peasants should be guaranteed lifetime security of land tenure. Women need equal land rights with men. And communities should have secure access to water, land and trees so that they can plant and harvest as they need.



7. Labour shortage

The shortage of oxen in Africa forces people to do much heavy work unaided. Planting, weeding and harvesting are often late for the rains as a result and crop yields are reduced. Men migrate to the cities to earn money leaving women to grow food and manage the farms alone. Women collect water, gather firewood and do all the other household chores, leaving less time for farming. They have little energy – or money – to invest in the land. Or to learn about more sustainable methods of agriculture.

Women need their workloads reduced. Farmers' groups can share out tasks. Tree-planting can help provide firewood. More wells nearer home can lighten the water-carrying burden. And a more egalitarian attitude by men would help – but so would more labour-saving tools.



*Much of the information on these pages derives from **The Greening of Africa** by Paul Harrison (Paladin Grafton Books, 1987).*

8. Painful poverty

Hunger drives the scramble for land. Food is short because African governments subsidize cash crops for export without helping farmers grow food for home markets. Prices are so low and marketing so difficult that farmers have little incentive to produce more food than they need for themselves. And that leaves very little for sale in the cities.

Massive foreign debts are the biggest problem here – and

reducing that burden is the most useful thing the West could do to safeguard Africa's environment. But ultimately Africa needs to become more self-reliant. African governments should diversify their economies to satisfy home markets. As far as possible they must become self-sufficient in food – by encouraging the small-scale agriculture which accounts for most food production. Small farmers need help with better agricultural techniques if they are to swell their yields in sustainable ways.





Sapping Nigeria's poor

Prayer, magic and economic austerity are all thought of as remedies for the same ill in one busy Lagos house. Elizabeth Obadina reports.

THE day starts early at Number 11 Adekunle Street in Abule Village, Lagos. Muslim clerics herald in the dawn, with a call to prayer which is answered nowadays by Muslims and Christians alike. Religion has boomed in the four years since the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced to solve Nigeria's economic problems: most Nigerians trust GOD more than SAP to deliver them from poverty.

By the time dawn breaks over the unfinished concrete building which is Number 11, most residents have washed, worshipped and are battling with bus queues on the long trek to work. 'I can't stay in the house after five,' says Dominic Anyim, the 29-year-old driver who occupies the back room. 'I have to report for work at 7.30am. If I leave at six, I can spend an hour waiting for a bus.'

Someone else who suffers from the bus shortage is Mary Ogunbemi, the 15-year-old schoolgirl who lives downstairs with her family. She endures four hours walking to and from school. Either she spends her 50 kobo (12.5 cents) on breakfast – or on a bus fare.

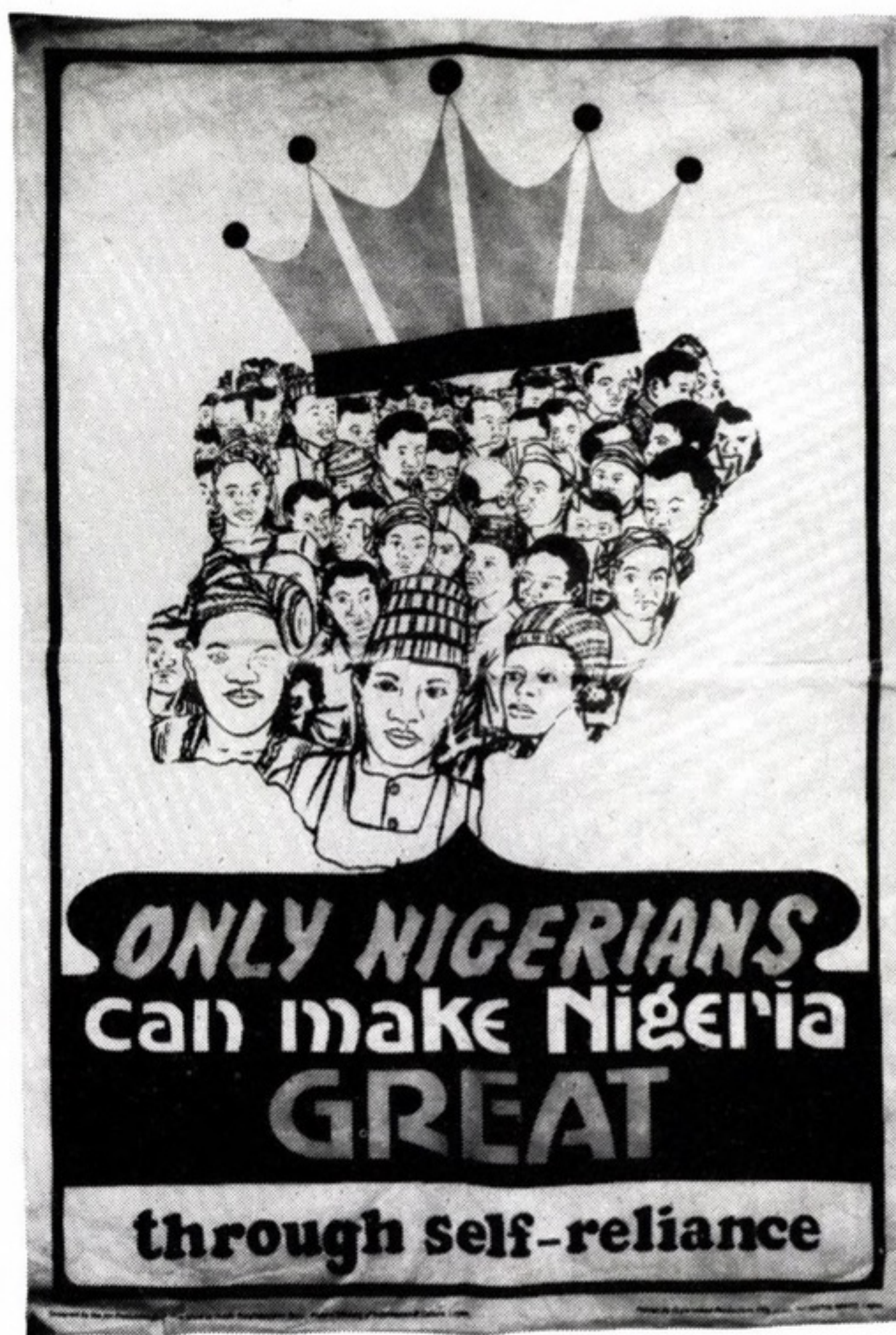
Public-transport cuts, executed as part of the SAP strategy to reduce public spending, are acutely felt by Lagos' seven million inhabitants. Only government and military functionaries travel easily around the city as armed police and soldiers push ordinary road users aside to allow official convoys with flashing lights and blaring sirens to get through.

Last year's anti-SAP riots resulted in the highly publicized donation of new buses from the military government as 'SAP-relief'. President Ibrahim Babangida even called off a state visit to France because he was so alarmed by the speed with which the protests spread through Nigeria's southern cities.

'SAP is death', 'We say no to SAP' and 'We are hungry' were the rallying cries of the rioters. They burnt government buildings, and caused frightened men in uniform to undress and scurry

back to their barracks and police stations in mufti. 'Everyone packed out of school that day,' says Mary, 'and we plucked green leaves to show that we supported the students'.

But it was hunger, not transport problems, that really spurred the protests. Mary never eats meat, and hardly any eggs, while Dominic says 'I only eat one meal a day now and chew kola nuts to keep me going.' Last July, Dominic sent



The rhetoric was fine: the reality of SAP was a disaster.

his wife home to her parents in Ghana because feeding their baby was becoming too costly.

In the room across from Dominic live Baba Ali and his wife Grace with their one-year-old baby. 'I had to leave my job as a security man with Yamaha motor bikes because they only paid me 125 naira (\$15) a month, which couldn't keep my family,' says Baba Ali. 'Now I have to

mend shoes for a living.'

Malnutrition is now a leading cause of death among patients at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital. A quarter of all Nigerian children suffer from it and a full 16 per cent need immediate medical attention as a result.

Education has been 'sapped' too. Free universal primary education has existed in Nigeria since the 1970s. But last year primary-school enrolment plummeted 20 per cent in Lagos as parents withdrew their children to send them to the villages or put them to work. Although the Government insists that SAP is Nigerian-designed and not imposed by the International Monetary Fund or World Bank, the country needs IMF and World Bank approval for its economic policies just to get debt relief from Western creditor nations.

Initially SAP was popular with ordinary people. It promised to restructure the economy away from total dependence on oil revenues. Self-reliance was the message propagated.

Baba Ali still thinks it would have worked but for corruption among Nigerian officials. And certainly corruption and an inadequate infrastructure have scared foreign investors away. But also under SAP, foreign exchange has not really benefitted ordinary people. Fully 31 per cent of foreign-exchange earnings in 1990 will go to service the billion-dollar national debt, instead of to bolster the country's human resources.

Health care is another area that has suffered. Mary and 11-year-old Godwin are fostered by their auntie. She used to run a shop but now she has got stomach cancer and is too ill to run the business full-time. Under SAP most of Nigeria's 21 states have abolished free health care and slashed the already inadequate resources given to public hospitals.

'Auntie sees the railway doctor which is free, but travelling the 12 miles tires her. The doctor says she should rest. So when Godwin and I have finished selling fruit in the evening, we look after the shop until 9.30,' says Mary. 'The shop used to close earlier but there's no market now,' she adds.

'No market' is a refrain that haunts Number 11. Madam Olowoporku is the landlady of the house, and a trader. Originally she planned to build Number 11 as a new

family home. But last year under SAP the price of cement rose from 50 cents a bag to \$16.88. And the market for her goods dwindled to almost nothing. Today she barely earns enough to maintain her immediate family let alone provide the 2,500 naira (\$312) her 24-year old son Tayo needs for the tools to set up as a mechanic. The market squeeze has also thwarted the ambitions of 16-year old

Sunday Fadeyi, who is trying to earn enough to become a 'wirer' or motor electrician in his home town. Sunday lives off one dollar a day, which he earns carrying loads at the vegetable market. Recently he obtained a charmed iron 'juju' ring 'to make money stay in my pocket'.

For the residents of 11 Adekunle Street, the SAP years have brought hunger, dashed ambitions, insecurity and splintered families. 'Since SAP there is not enough money,' says Mary. 'Before we used to get new clothes and shoes at Christmas. This year I got clothes and no shoes. Godwin got shoes and no clothes. And auntie's daughter got nothing. They say things will be better in 1992. But will they?' The question hangs. □

Elizabeth Obadina is a regular contributor to the NI based in Lagos.



**Encourage
self-reliance**

The problem

Frequently African countries have tried to reverse their economic decline by following World Bank and IMF advice and implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Many have ended up worse off as a result. And the social cost has been enormous. Health and education schemes, subsidies, services and environmentally sustainable rural development have all been slashed. And as usual the poor have suffered most.

The facts

- By 1988 nearly 30 African countries were implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes.
- The economies of 19 African countries with 'strong' adjustment programmes contracted by an overall average 1.5% a year between 1980 and 1987, while 12 countries with 'weak' or no programmes expanded by an average 1.2% a year.

The way forward

African economies must become more self-reliant and depend less on the West for aid and fair commodity prices. They should diversify to satisfy home markets. Multinational investments should be discouraged and industries should be built on locally available materials to meet primary local needs like housing, shelter and clothing. African economies should become export- rather than import-based, turning to each other for markets, finance and technical help. That means strengthening co-operation between them, beginning by taking a united stand on the repayment (or non-repayment) of foreign debts.



**DEVELOP
APPROPRIATELY**

Aid monstrosities

At least Africa benefits from the money and expertise the rich world ploughs back in aid. Or does it? Robert Woods hosts a tour of the Great Development Follies of our time.

THE first development projects in modern Africa were, let's face it, over-ambitious. Take the Great Groundnut Scheme. Around 50 million dollars were spent in the late-colonial 1950s on a grandiose scheme - conceived in London, executed in Tanzania - to grow groundnuts. The expert expatriate agriculturalists destroyed vast areas of grazing land before they realized that intensively mechanized groundnuts would not grow. Still the experts' hearts were in the right place, weren't they?

They started as they meant to continue. In the 1960s modernization was the watchword; hence the great Yugoslav mango-canning scheme in Ghana. Canning mangoes is not necessarily wrong. Indeed the Yugoslavs were very

enthusiastic about it. They built their canning-plant big. Very big. So big that it never ran quite to capacity. Or even anything near. Which is not surprising since its capacity was greater than the entire world trade in mangoes. Oh dear!

Try something simpler next time: milk in the Sudan. There is lots of milk in the Sudan, so they decided to bottle it. Good idea. Except the Sudanese don't drink bottled milk. They like it fresh from the cow. The Soviet bottling plant has not produced a bottle of milk in 24 years.

The Soviets have no monopoly on this kind of generosity. The Americans spent two million dollars on grain-storage silos in Senegal during the 1960s. The silos have remained empty ever since because they were built in places where Senegalese

Lake Victoria: probably the greatest monstrosity of all.

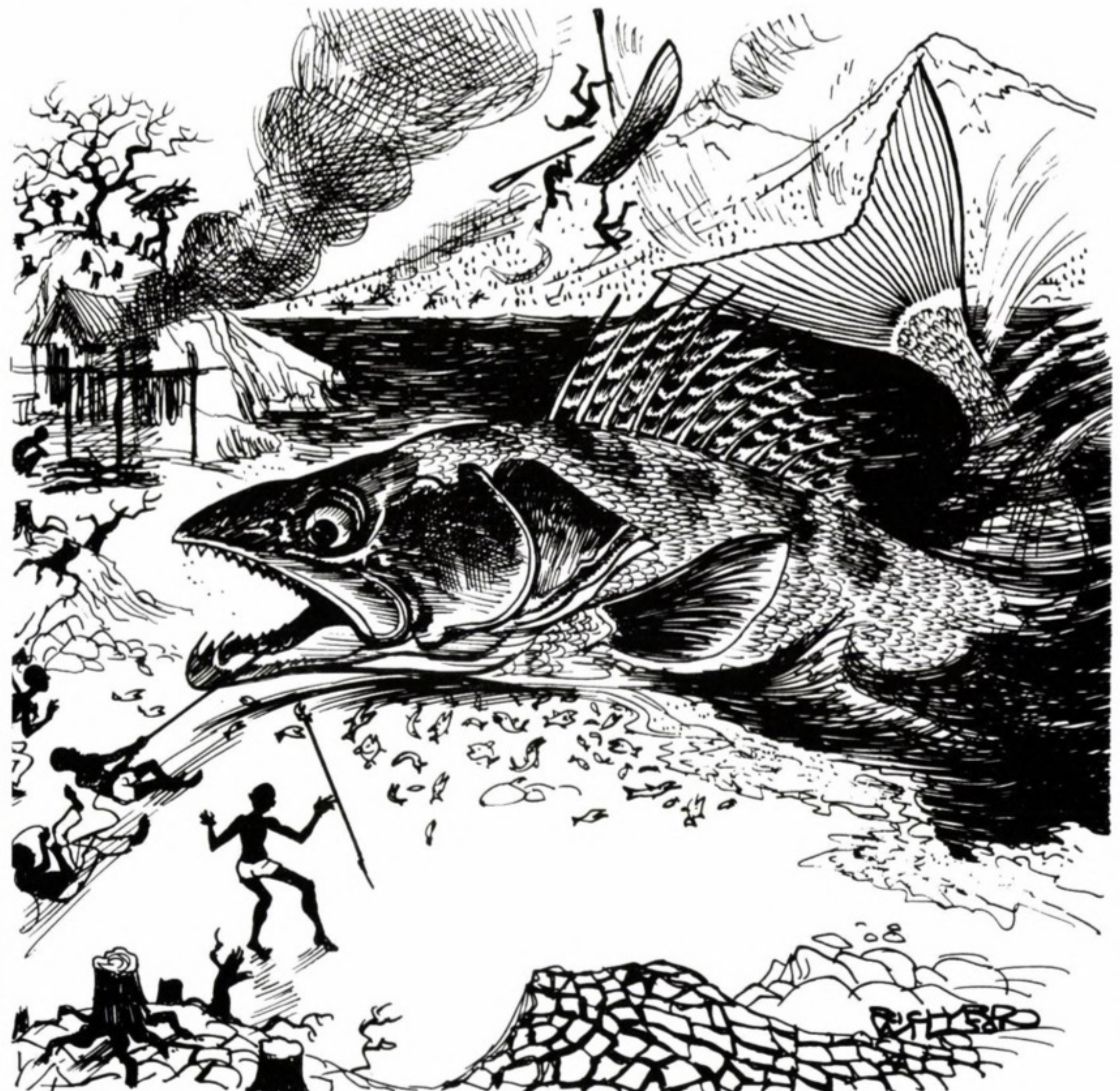


Illustration: Richard Willson

peasants never go. But they must be handsome additions to the landscape. And two million dollars worth of empty grain silos don't really hurt anyone.

The Canadian Wheat Scheme did hurt someone; the Barbeig cattle-herders who inhabit part of Tanzania. Or used to, until they were thrown off their land to make room for the Canadian Wheat Scheme in the mid-1970s. The land was actually better suited to cattle-grazing than to combine-harvesters and prairie wheat, as the Barbeig had proved over centuries. Ah well, an outmoded culture no doubt.

The Turkana Irrigation Scheme of the late 1970s grew lemons in the Kenyan desert. This was not a wise move. True, 15 Turkana gained employment as houseboys or cooks for the expatriates running the project. But the main effect on the rest of the Turkana people was to mess up their migration-routes and put still greater pressure on the drought-ridden bits of overgrazed bush that remained to them. The lemons doubtless tasted very nice, though it is not recorded whether a Turkana ever ate one.

The Saharan Water-The-Desert scheme was different. Westerners had learned a new set of values by that time: caring, sharing development; ask the locals what they want then try to supply it. They asked the Bedouin what they wanted. 'Water for our camels' was their reply.

It is actually quite easy to provide water in the Sahara desert because the whole place floats on it: bore an artesian well deep enough and water comes gushing out. So that is what the Europeans did. And behold there was lots of water, and the camel herds multiplied exceedingly because there was plenty to drink.

Unfortunately there wasn't anything extra for them to eat. For a hundred miles the little stunted bushes that had supported small herds were obliterated. And the brand-new boreholes were surrounded by hundreds of dead camels. Even the original herds starved too.

Nowadays of course, we know that development projects should be small-scale, with appropriate, user-friendly technology. Village woodlots, for example, are a wonderful idea. Where charcoal-burning has destroyed the forests, women still need timber to cook with, poles to build with. And so in Karamoja village, Uganda, woodlots were started in the mid-1980s. Excellent: locals all in favour, planted trees themselves, half an acre per community, the only Western technical input the plastic bags around the seedling roots. Oh yes, and forestry experts suggested planting eucalyptus trees.

Nobody told the villagers that eucalyptus doesn't burn well, and so is not good for cooking purposes; or that unless you spray DDT it gets so riddled by termites that building poles scatter white powder on the heads of those living below before suddenly falling down; or that the tree itself leaches the soil, preventing



almost anything from growing thereafter.

Still, sweet idea. Nearly as sweet as the literacy-by-post scheme that an Anglican bishop of my acquaintance tried once. Think about it.

All of these pale, however, beside the Village Fishponds Programme around Lake Victoria. This really seemed to have done everything right. It obeyed all the rules – or all the catch-phrases, depending on your degree of optimism or pessimism about Western approaches to development. Sustainable, low-tech, community-oriented: this had the works. Lake-region dwellers have a fishing culture already. Add small ponds to their back-yards and you get protein for all.

The fish they put in were Nile Perch which are carnivorous and grow from small fry into monsters six feet long in a couple of years. Some escaped into Lake Victoria, where the biggest native species are less than twelve inches. The Nile Perch population had no competitors and it has exploded. The lake people can now catch bigger fish more easily. Hooray.

There is a slight snag. There used to be 300 different species of fish in Lake

Victoria. The Nile Perch have eaten 180 of them. It is the biggest mass extinction of vertebrates in modern times. Well, with a growth rate like that, you'd expect the Nile Perch to have a big appetite.

That's not all. Victoria fisherpeople used to dry their catch in the sun. Nile Perch are too oily, and have to be smoked. So the fisherpeople have cut down their trees for charcoal. Soil erosion and desertification are following. Perhaps some eucalyptus plantations might help.

There is also the slight problem that, having rendered extinct 180 species in the lake, the Nile Perch have nothing left to feed on and so have started eating each other. A little thought shows that this is not a viable long-term survival strategy: you can't get by for long eating yourself.

Already the ecological balance of the lake has been destroyed: the fish that used to eat the algae in it are extinct. It is quite possible that an algal bloom will cover the lake, absorbing all the oxygen, making the lake stone-dead sterile and killing any remaining fish species with the temerity to survive this small-scale, ecologically-sensitive and culturally-appropriate development project. What will the fisherpeople catch then?

Also, Lake Victoria is the size of Switzerland and covering it with algae will have an appreciable, though unpredictable, effect on the climate. So: a desert, eroded soil and deforestation in the most fertile area on earth; 180 species rendered extinct and the number rising; 10,000 square miles, the largest fresh-water lake in the world, stone dead; and the world's climate doing who knows what. That was quite some development project. □

Robert Woods works undercover for a right-wing British daily newspaper.



The problem

Western aid is frequently tied to the construction of unwieldy and useless projects designed by foreign 'experts' who don't understand the African predicament or environment. These people are imported at great cost to do jobs they are often ill-qualified to do at home. They rarely speak the local language or ask local people what they want. And they design projects with more regard to how they appear on paper than to whether they meet local needs or capitalize on local knowledge. The result is frequently irrelevant to local requirements, relying on costly Western technology and great technological expertise. African elites have copied this style of Western development taking out huge

loans to build show projects, and imposing vast state farms on Africa's peasants, thereby destroying traditional ways.

The way forward

Development projects must involve the full participation and approval of local people, and be designed to meet local needs. They should build on 'common' knowledge about the environment and social requirements. And they should be small-scale and sustainable in terms of resources available. Good projects are often modest in their expenditure and fit naturally into local ways of doing things. In general the voluntary agencies are much better at doing this than government departments: all the development disasters mentioned in the story arose through official overseas aid rather than through independent charities. Foreign aid is usually best spent funding local people to solve their own problems, rather than employing foreigners who have little understanding of the African situation.



Learning to grow

Drought was killing the cattle and the Maasai children were starving. Their mothers had to do something. But what? Kenyan writer Rebeka Njau found out.

KIPIKU KUYAN and the other Maasai women suffered terribly when drought struck Kenya during the early 1980s. Wells and streams dried up. Cows and goats roamed the plains devouring any leaves available. Soon the hungry animals had eaten everything. One by one they started to die.

Kipiku and her family trekked miles seeking water and green pasture around the streams for their few remaining cows and goats. But everywhere was the same. Intensive grazing had left the land bare and uninhabitable. Even the borehole on the nearby Olkinos Group Ranch was dry.

Life was grim for the Maasai, who depended on cattle for food. Their children were riddled with skin ailments, sick with diarrhoea and stick-legged from malnutrition. Government and voluntary organizations made frantic efforts to supply them with food.

It was a humiliating experience. But the women suffered most. It was they who endured the children's cries of hunger; they who spent sleepless nights

wondering where the next meal would be found; they who plodded along the banks of dry river-beds scooping out water from underneath the sand.

Kipiku had to do something: cattle could no longer provide their basic food. She recalled a Maasai woman who had started a small *shamba* or homestead along the Olkinos stream and seemed able to feed her children. The woman, Lois Nkurne, possessed two years' secondary education and had previously worked as a teacher. She belonged to an organization which promoted development among women in the rural areas called Women's Development or *Maendeleo ya Waawake*.

Kipiku took some friends to pay Lois a visit. She wanted to learn how this woman had improved her family's quality of life.

Lois advised the women to start a self-help group which would produce food and generate income. They did so, forming the 70-strong Olkinos Women's Group.

They started growing food, working secretly without consulting their men. 'We did not let them know what we were doing until we were sure of success,' says Kipiku.

Cultivation was new to the women. But Lois and the government extension officers advised them, and that season they harvested a reasonable crop of cabbages, onions, tomatoes and a green vegetable called *sukuma wiki*.

Next the Group learned how to irrigate the land. Then they planted beans, potatoes and pawpaws. When the vegetables had sprouted, the women proudly took them along to show the Olkinos Group Ranch Committee what they had achieved. To their surprise the Committee gave them more land to cultivate.

One major difficulty has been irrigation. But the women have started a handicraft co-operative to raise money for irrigation pipes. They make beadwork and leather goods to sell at local and tourist markets.

Today their men treat them differently. 'The men value women now, because of their knowledge, effort and initiative,' says Kipiku.

The women have changed too. Before joining the Group they used to drink alcohol, especially a local brew called

busaa. There were constant quarrels when both husband and wife drank. Today the women no longer drink – and there are fewer quarrels.

Various voluntary organizations have supported the Group with ideas, materials and sometimes small grants.

Last year Kipiku was asked to attend two seminars on leadership training where she met many rural women from all over Kenya. They talked about different ways they had solved their problems. It gave Kipiku ideas that she and the other women might try. 'They gave me courage,' she says.

Because Kipiku cannot read or write, she had to remember everything that she had learned so that she could pass it on to other women. But she did so conscientiously and has united the Group by her efforts, which have shown that illiterate women, living in traditional societies, can transform their lives through sheer hard work and enquiring minds. □

Rebeka Njau is a Kenyan novelist whose book *Ripples In The Pool* is published by Heinemann.



The problem

Women in Africa work like beasts of burden, fetching firewood, carrying water, looking after the children and growing food. They are Africa's main food producers but have little time to devote to the task. Often they are not legally regarded as adults; they frequently have no land rights; and a husband can keep his wife's earnings. Many women are illiterate with little access to training and other kinds of help. They are also terribly neglected by development projects, which generally target men.

The facts

- Women produce two-thirds of Africa's food.
- In 1982 only 0.05% of all UN spending on African agriculture went to programmes for rural women.

The way forward

Development programmes should prioritize the funding of women's projects. And they should target women for special help to increase their agricultural productivity – especially by reducing their workload. Simple labour-saving devices like more efficient stoves could cut the time women spend hunting for firewood. More wells closer to home would mean less time hauling water. And better education would help women recognize the connections between food production, nutrition and health.

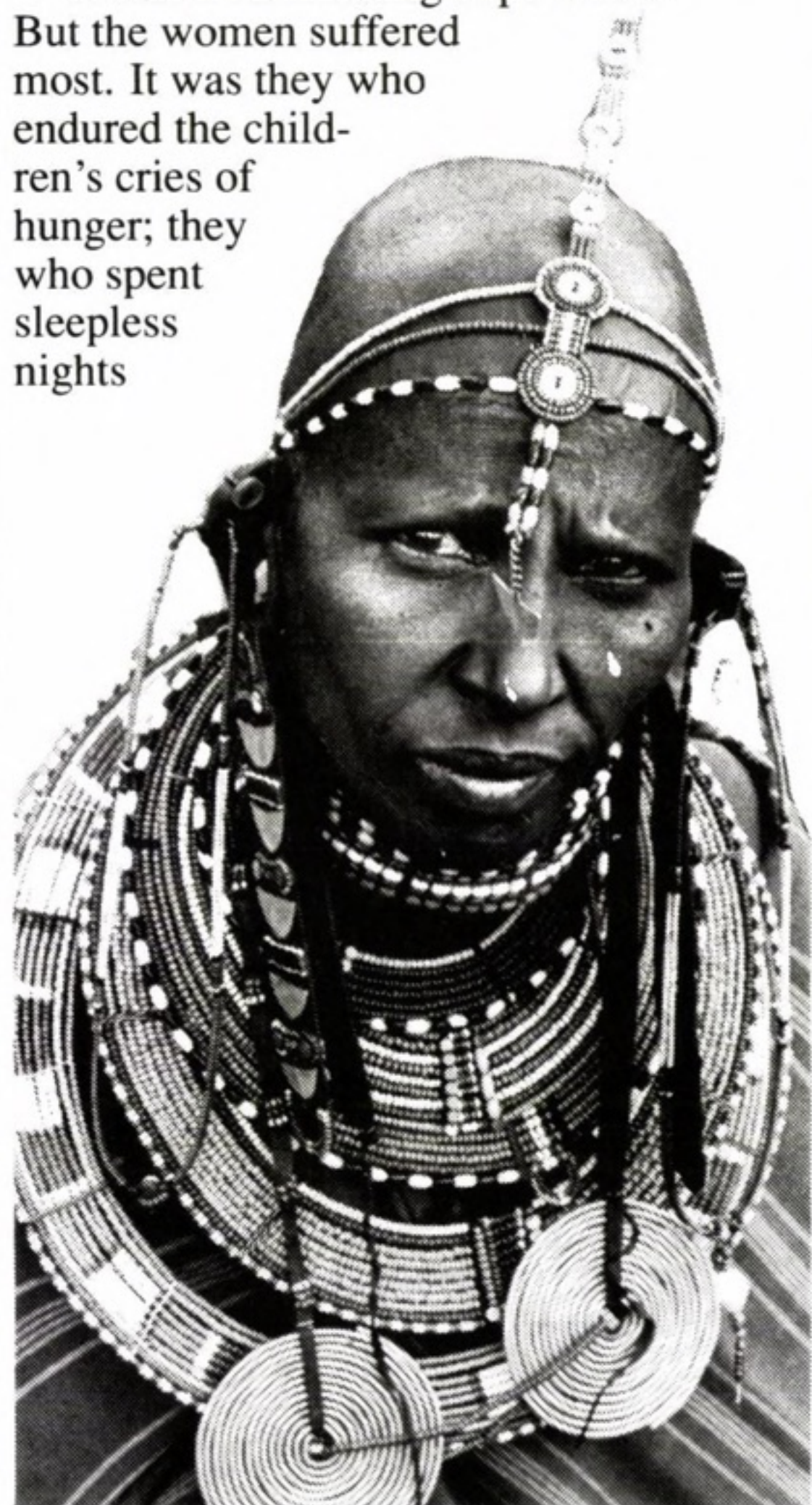


Photo : Maggie Murray/Format

TREES

Stumped

Rainforest plan backfires

THE worldwide plan to halt rainforest destruction will accelerate forest loss, according to a new report by the World Rainforest Movement (WRM), an international coalition of non-governmental organizations.

It has called for a moratorium on funding for the plan, which is endorsed by the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and some 67 national governments.

Launched in 1985, the eight-billion-dollar plan was supposed to provide international finance for preservation projects by backing national 'forestry master-plans' in developing countries. These would identify the causes of forest loss and try to reverse the process while securing citizens' welfare.

But the WRM says these goals are not being achieved. Rather than preserving the forest, the national plans have promoted massive investment in the logging industry. In Peru, for



Felling the future: preservation policies make more logs fall.

instance, the plan will increase logging dramatically. The result will be yet more destruction as landless settlers from the highlands pour down the new logging roads into the heart of the jungle. The same effects are likely in Guyana, Cameroon, the Philippines, Colombia, Papua New Guinea and Ghana.

The WRM review says there has been little consultation with local communities, interest groups and indigenous forest dwellers. Issues such as land tenure, ownership and planning have been inadequately considered.

Dr Marcus Colchester, who carried out the review with Larry

Lohmann of *The Ecologist* magazine, says the invasion of forest areas by settlers was identified in the plans as the largest single cause of forest destruction, but no action was taken. Planning teams were dominated by foresters and economists.

Tropical forests are now disappearing worldwide at the rate of 142,000 square kilometres a year through commercial logging, cattle ranching, and conversion to agriculture. A further 200,000 square kilometres are seriously degraded.

The result is not only that forest people are dispossessed. Plants and animals are made extinct, floods and droughts follow, soil erosion becomes widespread and the associated industries add to global warming.

Dr Colchester says government policies must change. The lead should come from local peoples: 'The need is to replace the present technocratic approach with a bottom-up approach.' At root, he says, the debate is between profit and common sense, rich and poor.

Teresa Apin/Third World Network

PESTICIDES

Bug wars

Alternatives to chemicals in Nicaragua

HUNDREDS of newspaper cones hang upside down in a cotton field in Nicaragua. Close by, a moth flutters over a cotton bush. In the distance rise the

volcanoes which are the backbone of this fertile land.

The newspaper cones are part of a Nicaraguan experiment in alternative biological pest control. Inside the paper cones are tiny wasps, *trichogramma pretiosum*, which will feed on the eggs of the moth whose larvae infest the cotton plants.

Professor Louise De Lugo leads a research team at Léon

University. She wants Nicaragua to reduce its dependence on costly imported chemical pesticides, which she says are a health hazard.

There are more than 200 reported cases of pesticide poisoning a year in this country of less than four million people. ICI, which has 55 per cent of the pesticide market here, say farmers spray chemicals more than 20 times in a season.

Single-seater aeroplanes hedge-hop across the cotton fields spraying to keep pests at bay. You can smell the pesticide in the air as you drive through the countryside. There are advertisements for ICI chemicals everywhere.

It takes about 50,000 female wasps, the size of tiny flies, to rid one *manzana* (0.7 hectares) of moth larvae. Field trials on maize, tomatoes and cotton have produced success rates of between 60 and 100 per cent.

'We like to demonstrate that biological control is a practical means of controlling insects,' said Dr Charles Acre, a US citizen working at Léon University. Only lack of funds is preventing production on a commercial scale.

But already Professor De Lugo is experimenting with an even more remarkable means of natural pest control. In the small laboratory in the centre of the old city of Léon researchers are growing viruses that will attack local pests.

Inside plastic margarine tubs lie the dead bodies of host larvae that have been infected by viruses. They will be placed in the refrigerator before being released in the field. The skill of Professor De Lugo's team has been in isolating wasps and viruses in the field and breeding them in the laboratory.

Señor Jose Dolores Estrada, the director of ICI's subsidiary in Nicaragua says his products are not dangerous. 'There has been a shift in the last 15 years to high-tech products that don't hurt people', he insisted.

Few at the Léon laboratory argue that local farmers will be able to dispense with chemical pesticides altogether. But their newspaper cones in the fields are a sign that the pest control of the future can be cheaper, safer – and home-grown.

John Tanner



Wasps and newsprint provide healthier protection than pesticides.

Photo: ILO

Photo: Martin Stott

ANIMALS

Happy hippo

Brief bid for freedom on Mexican savannahs

MEXICAN gangsters often have nicknames. But 'El Peregrino' (The Pilgrim) is a two-and-a-half ton, four-year-old African hippopotamus. He escaped from the private ranch of one of Mexico's top political bosses and for months cut a swathe through two states before the authorities could work out how to capture him.

In September, the hippo broke down a cyclone fence and burst out of El Jovero ranch 200 miles north of Mexico City.

The Secretariat of Ecology and Urban Development (SEDUE) says that El Peregrino began 'to wander without fixed route'. Maria Elena Hoyo, director of Mexico City's Chapultepec Zoo, thinks the animal was obeying its African instincts and looking for good grazing ground near a slow-moving body of water.

Travelling by night, El Peregrino's odyssey took him 25 miles north-east across a state border and on to the cactus-studded savannahs of Queretero, where he found his paradise in the form of a big irrigation pool

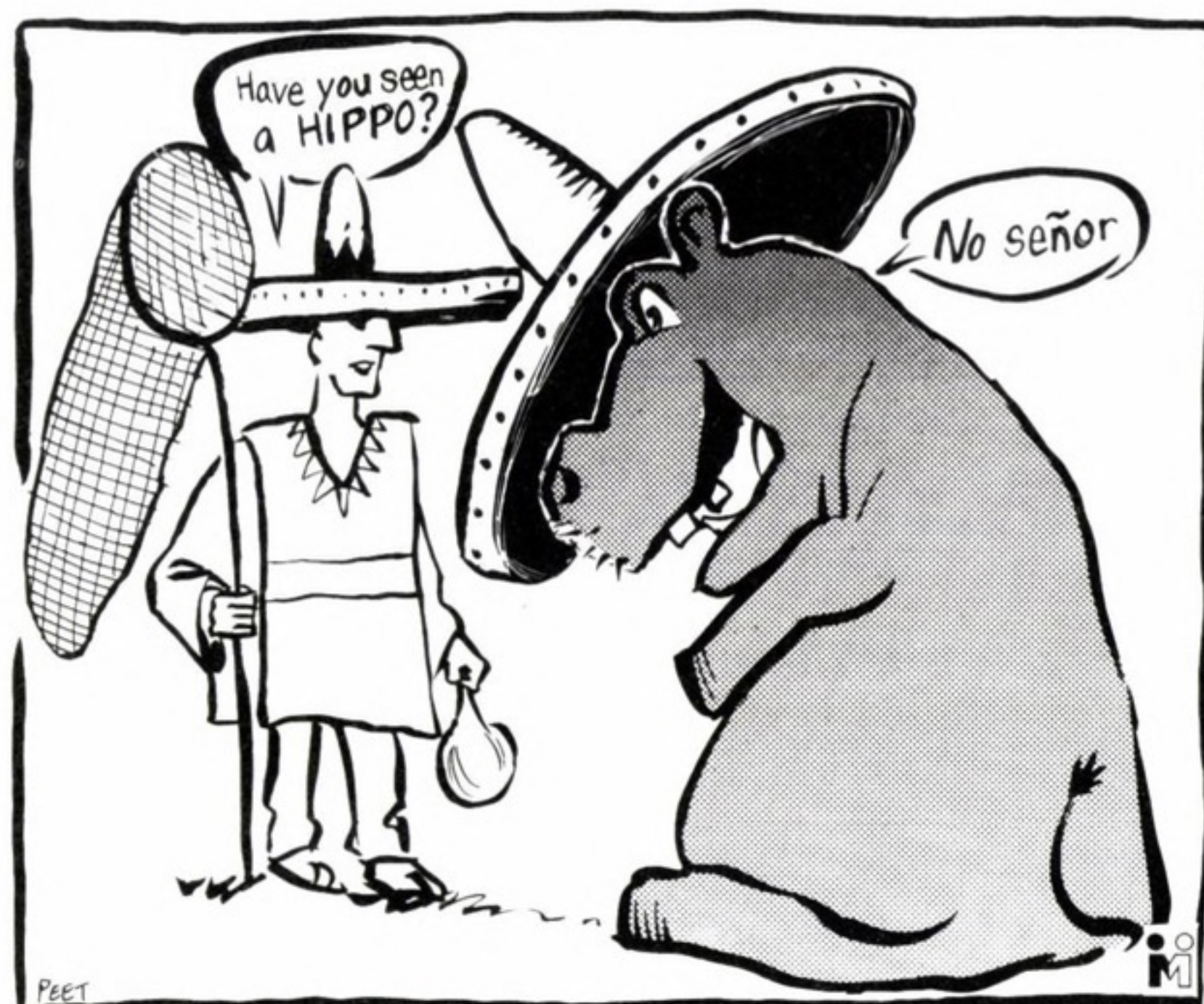
on a communal farm ('ejido') near Santa Rosa Jauregui. He then ensconced himself in the San Jose reservoir of 'Chicken Foot' ejido, hiding out under water by day and marauding through the cornfields by night.

'It looked like someone had driven a bus through the corn when El Peregrino was done with us,' said Pedro Licea, an ejido official. Some thought the Devil had taken up residence in the pool. The hippo was said to be trying to seduce local cows.

Maria Elena Hoyo began to have doubts about returning him to captivity. 'One of the best moments in my life was to see the animal free under a shower of stars. The thought of sending him to the zoo wounds the soul,' she wrote. 'El Peregrino had become accustomed to the place by then and the people there were no longer afraid of him. In fact they were very, very happy with their hippo.'

The local council took to leaving large quantities of carrots and alfalfa by the pool. Local citizens sabotaged SEDUE technicians by using firecrackers to scare the hippo away from traps that had been set for him. For a week he was reported 'disappeared'.

He was finally discovered in the Santa Rosa Jauregui raw



Cartoon: Gemini

sewage outflow. Next day, after obtaining the appropriate permits, 39 technicians, inspectors and police moved in, cut off all exits and lured El Peregrino into a cage with fresh onions. He was taken 400 kilometres south to a small zoo in Chilpancingo, where he is known as Pipo and shares quarters with Papus, a circus dropout.

The El Peregrino affair has highlighted a thriving Mexican trade in exotic animals. Private zoos are popular with some of

Mexico's super-rich. A big-time drug trafficker captured in early December in Mexico City kept a priceless New Guinea cockatoo, a Bengal tiger, a panther, a puma and a jaguar in his apartment. Ownership of the last two animals – endangered Mexican species – is illegal. No-one is entirely sure how the owner of El Peregrino came to acquire him in the first place.

John Ross/Gemini

EDUCATION

Islam ahead

State schools in Bangladesh cannot compete with mullahs

THE drive towards the 'Islamization' of Bangladesh by President Ershad is having a visible effect on the country's education system.

Some Bangladeshi children go to state primary schools, while others attend *madrassahs*, traditional religious schools which offer a parallel education to that of the state. In both schools the method of teaching is formal. Children buy their own notebooks and pens while the school provides the books.

But there the similarities end. The *madrassahs* are attractive, well-maintained buildings with plenty of funds behind them,

some channelled indirectly from the Middle East. The government primary schools are usually in run-down buildings with a pervasive air of neglect about them.

The village of Dashpaika near Bishwanath in Sylhet is typical. The *madrassah* is a beautifully kept whitewashed building with an attractive garden and imposing gateway. The new building was completed in 1986 from funds provided by the community. The only building that belongs to the government primary school is a dilapidated hut with a mud floor and walls of bamboo. The school rents another concrete building where several classes are taught together in one very crowded room.

The *madrassah* has 210 pupils taught by 13 teachers. Attendance is good. The Principal, sipping tea in his spacious office, pronounces himself very satisfied with his job and his school. The 308 children of the primary school have just four teachers, of whom one is away for a year's training. A two-shift system operates.

The reason for the difference

seems to lie in the degree of local involvement. Before 1973, primary schools were locally managed, but central government then took over responsibility. Most people in the villages feel that the schools are no longer their business. If a window breaks or a blackboard is damaged then it is the government that should repair it. Teacher absenteeism is a real problem.

But the mosque with its *maktab* and *madrassah* are central to the community, which supports them accordingly. People are keen to be involved in their upkeep. In Dashpaika 30 per cent of the running costs and teachers' salaries are paid from local funds. One wealthy local family gave 26,000 taka (about \$750) for a public-address system for the *madrassah* to use at public functions.

Madrassahs seem certain to go from strength to strength, while primary schools struggle to maintain the morale of teachers and pupils in very difficult circumstances.

Rachel Warner



No match for Islam: the battered state school in Dashpaika.

ANIMAL RIGHTS

Death on the Nile

A new twist in the gruesome story of the trade in frogs' legs from developing countries was discovered in London when a British Airways flight, en route for Geneva, was found to be transporting frogs from Egypt – alive.

A vet who examined the frogs found that they were jammed into knotted nylon bags which were in turn loaded into 200 wicker baskets. The frogs were unable to move and many suffocated. In all more than 3,000 could have died.

According to an article in the UK's Observer newspaper, one Egyptian entrepreneur, nicknamed 'the Frog Prince', employs a team of hunters. Captured frogs are brought to a specially constructed reservoir, where up to five million are matured before being caught and flown out. Around 35 tonnes of frogs are exported from Egypt each month, mainly to France. Because of increased demand, hunting may soon expand to the upper reaches of the Nile and beyond – into the Sudan and Ethiopia. Such hunting can have serious side-effects as the insects previously eaten by frogs multiply unchecked, devastating crops and spreading disease. Nevertheless, for the 10,000 hunters employed in Egypt at the height of the season, the short-term gain makes it all worthwhile. A good frog catcher can earn more in a day than a university graduate earns in a month.

From Agscene No 98 1990. More information from: Compassion in World Farming, 20 Lavant Street, Petersfield, Hants GU32 3EW

UNITED STATES

Promises, promises

THE PROBLEMS

- Nearly 150 million people in the United States currently live in urban areas where the air fails to meet minimum health standards. The EPA estimates 3,000 cancer cases per year from air toxics.
- At least 275 air toxics are known to be emitted by industrial facilities. The EPA has only regulated 7 of them.
- Because of nitrogen-oxide and sulphur-dioxide emissions, rain and fog in some states have the acidity of battery acid.

THE PROMISES

- Twenty years from now, "every American in every city in America will breathe clean air."
- "The time for action on clean air and acid rain is now."



THE RECORD

- Under the president's Clean Air Act, cities that fail to meet standards are simply reclassified to a new problem level, with correspondingly lower standards and extended deadlines for compliance.
- His Clean Air Act calls for reducing nitrogen-oxide emissions by 2 million tons by the year 2000. Given the estimated increase in emissions from new sources, this will mean a net increase of 1 million tons of nitrogen oxide.
- Instead of the "best available control technology," the bill provides for using the "maximum achievable control technology based on cost and feasibility" – at the discretion of the EPA.

From Mother Jones, Vol 15 No 3

CHILE

Revenge attacks

Only ten days after Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin was sworn in as Chile's first civilian president in 16 years, revenge attacks began against the military men who ruled the country under the dictatorship of General Pinochet. Two men opened fire in the Santiago office of Gustavo Leigh, 69, former air force commander-in-chief and one of the members of the junta that overthrew President Salvador Allende Gossens in 1973. Leigh was critically wounded along with an associate – retired general Enrique Ruiz. Organizations from both left and right took credit for the attack, which confounded hopes of a peaceful shift to democracy. The Left wants justice for the military's supposed crimes, while the Right believe they are traitors for handing over power.

The conservative local press has predicted a campaign of 'selective terrorism' against members of the Pinochet regime.

From Time Vol 135 No 14 1990

MULTINATIONALS

Buying greenness

Corporate giants are boosting the coffers of environmental groups in return for influence and a greener image. 'These corporations claim to be environmentalists but they are buying off groups who are opposing them,' says David Rapaport of Greenpeace. In 1988 Chevron and Exxon gave \$50,000 each to the World Wildlife Fund/Conservation Foundation. Other donors included Philip Morris, Mobil

and Morgan Guaranty Trust. The National Wildlife Federation, which promotes co-operation between industry leaders and environmentalists, recently added three new members to its Corporate Council. It cost each company \$10,000 to join and among the 14 members are Arco, Dupont and Ciba Geigy. Fast-food chains – some of the worst contributors to litter and waste – are also keen to be green. Only after considerable agonizing did the Sierra Club turn down \$700,000 from McDonalds, who wanted to sponsor an environmental education project. The Audubon Society, another environmental fund, were made a similar offer and refused.

From Mother Jones, Vol 15 No 3

FOOD

Nuclear triumph

The British and Australian governments are at odds with each other over food irradiation. If Britain legalizes irradiation this year, as intended, it will be a major triumph for the nuclear industry. But Australia is still sceptical. The European Parliament agrees with the Australians – it voted in October last year to impose a ban from the end of December 1992.

The dosage used in the food irradiation process is up to 100 million times greater than chest X-rays. But even this is no guarantee of eliminating all bacteria, fungi and insects that can spoil food or cause disease.

Bob Hawke's government introduced a three-year moratorium on the manufacture, sale and import of irradiated food in December 1989. The Consumer Affairs Minister, Mr Nick Bolus, says the country's trading partners 'remain unconvinced about the safety

of the process. Australia's international reputation as a provider of high-quality fresh produce could be threatened if irradiation was introduced.' While promoters – and the United Nations expert committee – maintain it is safe, the World Health Organization has reopened investigations into irradiated food and aims to produce a comprehensive scientific report.

From Consumer Lifelines, Irradiation No 36/90

ARMS

Bargain bazaar

With major reductions in European military forces pending, sophisticated second-hand systems at discount prices could flood the arms markets in other parts of the world – especially in Asia, where countries are continuing to build up their armed forces.

Much of the US's surplus front-line equipment from Europe is now being offered at huge discounts – as low as five per cent of the market price for equivalent new systems. Thailand and the Philippines, for example, have been offered the main US battle tank, the M60A1, at \$115,000 each, down from the previous price of well over one million dollars.

From Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 147 No 13 1990

WOMEN

Sexist neglect

Ten years after the United Nations formally adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 44 of the UN's 159 member countries have still not ratified or signed it. All but two of these are from the Third World, the exceptions being Albania and South Africa.

From UN Division for the Advancement of Women, Vienna

"endquote"

'There is a sort of joke about girls: they are called "Toyotas" because the market price for a young bride equals a new car for her family.'

A quote from a civil servant in the Pacific islands country of Vanuatu.

The hope of Lot 321

Cecilia is trying to create a home for herself and her children – the only way a poor, single woman can in Costa Rica. She told her story to Canadian journalists Judy Blankenship and Andrew Wilson.

As she stepped off the bus at 7am that morning, a blanket tucked under her arm and a bag slung over her shoulder, Cecilia could see a few people already starting to put up makeshift shacks and tents.

She had learned a few days earlier that this 'invasion' was about to occur on a piece of government-owned land just outside the Costa Rican capital, San José. Anyone without a home could take part, the organizers said over a loudspeaker as they drove their van around town.

After 20 years of cleaning the houses of others and living in either cramped servants' quarters or tiny rented rooms, this was Cecilia's only chance of ever having a home of her own. At last she would be able to have her two children, currently living with her sister in Northern Province, come and live with her.

So here she was, helping to create a new settlement. 'Find a place and sit tight,' a voice rasped through a megaphone. 'You will be called by name and given a number which will give you the right to a lot. If you're not here when your name is called you lose your place.'

Cecilia obeyed – and stayed rooted to the spot for the next five days. She slept rough on a piece of cardboard, leaving the plot only briefly once a day or so to get something to eat from a nearby store. During the course of the week, 500 more people arrived, having left rented rooms, squatters' shacks or the streets. All were hoping to be given that magic piece of paper with a number – their claim to a small parcel of land.

Then, on Monday, Cecilia's name was called: Lot 321 was ascribed to her and marked out. With that she felt confident enough to take the bus back to her rented room, gathered her belongings and began to collect bits of wood and zinc to build a temporary shack.

Cecilia is one of the tens of thousands of Costa Ricans who took cautious hope from the promise of Oscar Arias, elected president in January 1986, that during his administration some 80,000 new houses would be built to ease the country's housing crisis.

Today she is still living in her temporary shack, waiting for the Government to keep its promise. Via a tangle of exposed wires she gets enough electricity to dimly light one bulb. The system is far from safe – faulty wiring has already caused one fire. She has to fetch water from a tank at the bottom of the hill. To add to her difficulties she has, since moving into the shack, given birth to a third child.



But recently Cecilia's hopes of getting a proper house were raised when she was told to stay at home and await the visit of a government engineer. He came – and informed her that due to an error in the measurement of her plot she would have to demolish her shack and move it ten yards before construction of the proper house could begin.

Now this is no easy task for a woman in Cecilia's position to accomplish. She has no family living nearby to call upon for help. And a land invasion does not always ensure long-term popular co-operation within the settlement. People are brought together – but only by a common interest in having a home of their own. They do not necessarily develop into a community.

The people who led this invasion vanished within a month of its happening. Motivated by political interests, they had never intended to live there themselves anyway. They left in place a number of committees – health, security, utilities – through which the inhabitants were supposed to meet their collective needs and co-ordinate the building of their houses. But, bereft of organizational support, the committees melted away and only 40 of the 300 houses planned have been completed.

Cecilia managed to move her shack the required ten yards and is now waiting for slabs of concrete building material to arrive. If and when they do, she will have to dream up some way of getting them to her lot – and erecting them. If she cannot get neighbours to help she may have to find money to hire labourers. Cecilia's situation reveals the gulf that exists between the noble intentions of policy-makers and the social complexities that bedevil inadequately financed programmes.

But Cecilia's dream of a house is the only dream she has – and so she clings to it, believing that somehow or other it must work out.

Judy Blankenship and Andrew Wilson live and work in Costa Rica.



I think.

by Martyn Turner

HERE'S A TYPICAL
EUROPEAN-AMERICAN
POLITICIAN.



HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT
THE GREENHOUSE
EFFECT.



WHAT'S HE GOING
TO DO ABOUT IT?



AAAH!



THESE WILL PROTECT
HIM FROM HARMFUL
SOLAR RADIATION....



AND FROM HARMFUL
CONSTITUENTS WHEN
THEY REALISE THAT'S ALL
HE'S GOING TO DO....





Promising politics swamped: A Martinez in *Pow Wow Highway*.

★ FILM

Pow Wow Highway

directed by Jonathan Wacks

An offbeat comedy with a strong political dimension, this is the story of two Cheyenne Indians, a beat-up old car and a long, long road. It begins at the Cheyenne reservation of Lane Deer, Montana, progressing through Wyoming and South Dakota to a final serio-comic conclusion in Texas.

Buddy Red Bow (A Martinez) is tense, cynical, politically aware and very suspicious of a big mining company's plans for the Reservation. With little interest in the past except to see a history of betrayal, he's very vocal about the future danger for his people: 'This ain't the American Dream, this is the Third World! ... White America ain't gonna hold off much longer, they want our coal and our oil and our uranium and they're gonna take it!'

The huge and lugubrious Philbert (Gary Farmer), on the other hand, spends the time he's not eating lost in reveries about religious ritual and warrior prowess. Momentarily these reveries seem to become real as the ill-matched pair head south in a truly decrepit '64 Buick when Buddy hears of his sister being arrested on a trumped-up drugs charge down in Texas.

As with all road movies, the ensuing journey takes in quantities of landscape, adventure and misunderstanding with the emphasis upon Philbert's discovery of his heritage. 'This is the most sacred place in America, probably the world!' he says of the Black Hills of South Dakota, while in one of the film's most atmospheric sequences he has a vision of some bedraggled Cheyenne

next to the plaque marking an atrocity of 100 years before.

The problem is the contrived sense of whimsy which eventually swamps the movie's promising political context: a plot which at the start explicitly raises the issue of mining exploitation of Reservation land gradually dumps this in favour of knockabout comedy. What redeems the film is the attractive austerity of its images and the insights it gives into the lives of modern-day Native Americans. The Lane Deer Reservation itself is a palpably real and lived-in environment: a woman leaves it for a housing development saying 'There's a shooting a week, it's like living in Belfast!'

As a whole *Pow Wow Highway* is seriously lacking in dramatic substance but there's just enough originality to maintain interest. Guardedly recommended.

Politics ★★★★★
Entertainment ★★

★ BOOKS

Angela Davis: An Autobiography

by Angela Davis (The Women's Press UK)

Angela Davis's autobiography reads like a thriller ... It contains clearly defined goodies and baddies, and is redolent with violence and passion – though in this case the passion is for justice and socialist ideals and the violence that of a state that allows economic, racial and sexual inequalities to flourish. After 15 years her book is now republished with a new retrospective preface in which the 44-year-old Angela Davis contemplates the 28-year-old.

We meet her in 1970, relieved of her post as philosophy lecturer at the University of California for being a com-

munist (a move instigated by the then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan). Soon she is on the run from the FBI, charged with kidnapping, murder and conspiracy against the state – allegations trumped up after her campaigning for the release of the Soledad brothers. This is where the thriller element emerges as we discover an underbelly of the US riddled with phobia about 'communists' – especially black ones.

After the tense scenario of arrest, Davis flashes back to the experiences that moulded the woman of strength and conviction: her formative years in Birmingham, Alabama, and the parental encouragement and scholarships that equipped her with the intellectual means to articulate the plight of disadvantaged Americans.

A fascinating insider's view of the spirit of the time, it proves that political prisoners were never the prerogative of the Eastern Bloc – while also, in these more right-wing times, seeming disturbingly like a period piece.

Politics ★★★★★
Entertainment ★★

★ MUSIC

Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful World

by Johnny Clegg and Savuka (EMI)

Johnny Clegg's international recognition (if not success) is no mere by-product of the present interest in South Africa. He has evidently thought hard about ways of making his music more accessible to an international audience.

But that kind of drive for acceptability prompts some

inevitable questions. Have the African rhythms been watered down to suit the Western palate (as with Paul Simon's *Graceland*)? Has the political Johnny Clegg 'sold out' to the commercial world?

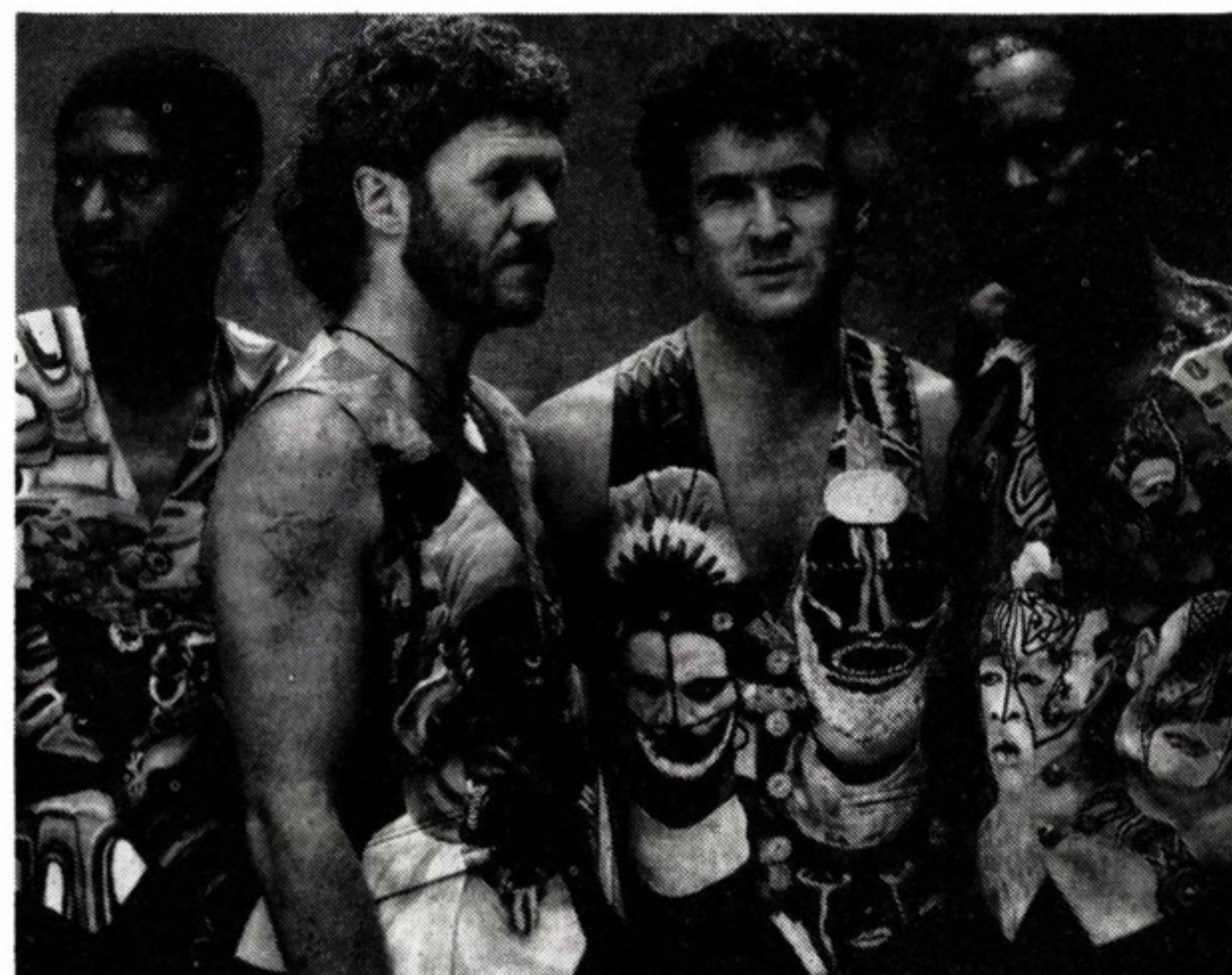
The chart success in South Africa of the single *One (Hu)Man One Vote* suggests that the new sound has struck a chord at home. The song was written after the assassination of anti-apartheid activist Dr David Webster but has profited deservedly from the build-up to Nelson Mandela's release.

But to an ear attuned to the rawer rhythms of Clegg's earlier work – especially with Sipho Umchunu in Juluka – this can seem rather bland. The delivery is smoother but the South African traditional influences are more subdued, overlaid instead with a veneer of disco. Interestingly, the two most South African of the songs – *Vezandlebe* and *Sengikhum-bula Ubuso Bakho* – do not appear on record but only as bonuses on cassette and CD.

Still, Clegg's politics have not been diluted in the same way as his rhythms. And, far from being outdated by the rapid pace of recent events, his songs can seem disturbingly prophetic. Often the words work hand in glove with the music to play off anxiety against hope. In *Bombs Away*, for example, a song about someone betraying a friend while under torture, the crazy concertina and unison trumpets provide a poignant backdrop of overriding optimism. And elsewhere the fear that South Africa will 'slip back into the dark' is balanced by the sheer joy of *Moliva*, a celebration of Clegg's Zulu wedding in which the strong choral harmonies chase away any threats of sentimentality.

Politics ★★★★★
Entertainment ★★

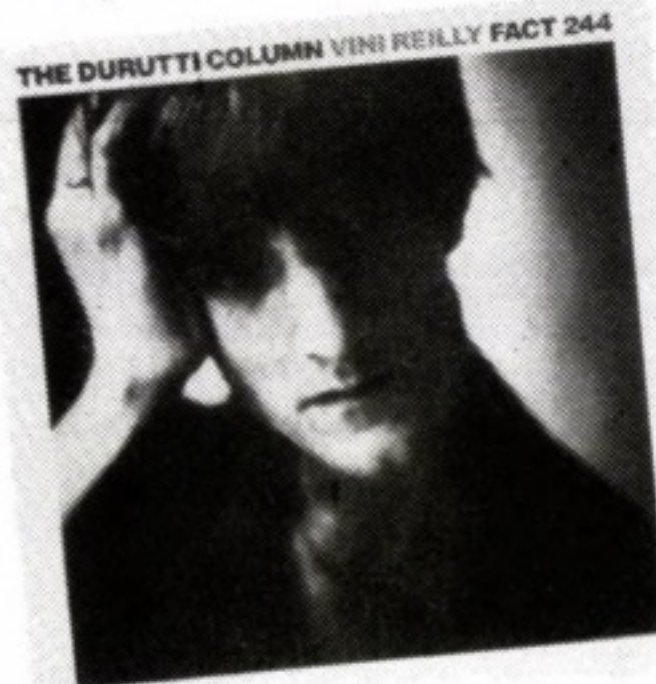
Diluted rhythm: Johnny Clegg (second from right) and Savuka.



New Age and Ambient Music

by various artists

'New Age' and 'ambient' musics – sometimes similar but never synonymous – have made the

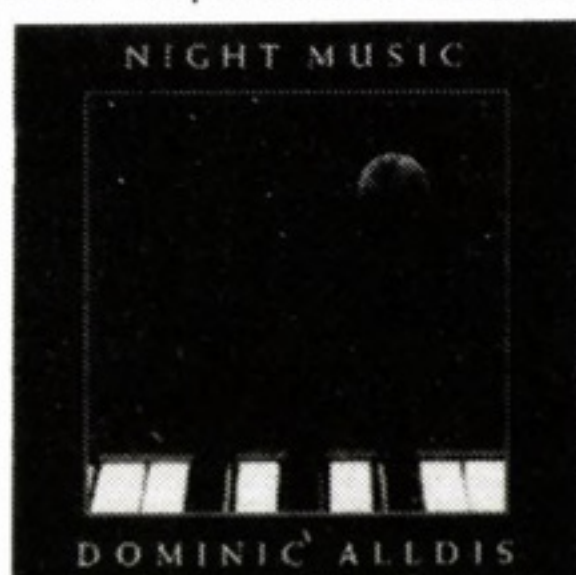


quietest but most successful incursion into the pop market in the past decade. These musics, unlike pop proper, aren't urgent or upfront: they're less structured, more pacific and even subliminal in effect.

New Age music sounds as if it should offer emancipation from the social and economic imperatives we're confined in. It

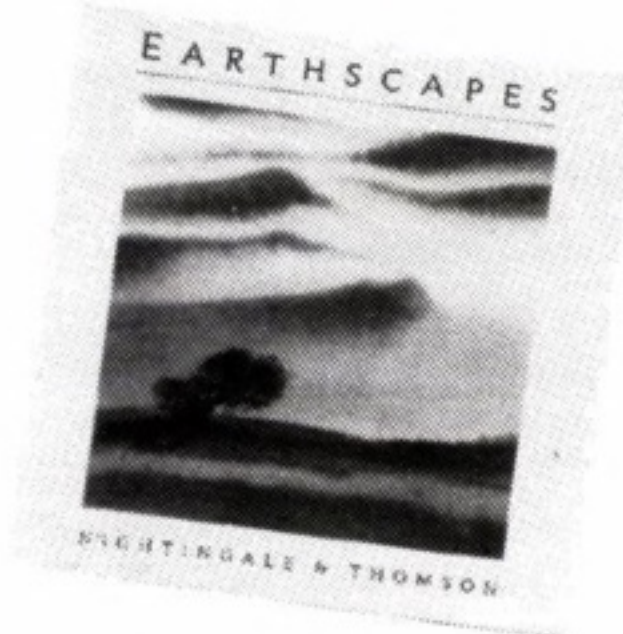
seems to promise the rediscovery of a redemptive natural world and lost holistic values – as in **Earthscapes** by Nightingale and Thomson (*Lumina*). But in fact hardcore New Age, the 'healing' music that's sold in alternative health centres and record shops, actually complements and colludes with the world of production and consumption.

It's a warm bath phenomenon, just like transcendental meditation when it's used to help executives manage stress and ultimately perform better. New Age music, like the alternative beliefs it's loosely associated with, belongs to a higher form of capitalism that urges



you to privatize your own bodily and spiritual welfare (no more collective provision, just a pick'n'mix of paid-for therapies). It tells you to expect the maximum return on all your assets, even your unconscious mind. As the glossy magazine said, 'put your daydreams to work'.

This New Age music is an anodyne balm meant to assure well-being and self-assurance. **Night Music** by Dominic Alldis (*Lumina*) sounds like a snow-storm paperweight or a descendant of Erik Satie's ironic minimalism. **Earthscapes** is widescreen travelogue music, the pleasant clatter of executive desktop toys.



But ambient music, like Brian Eno's **Apollo** (EG), with its suspended, mercurial chords and eventless tranquillity, is a different matter entirely. And Durutti Column's **Vini Reilly** (*Factory*) all diffracted guitars and spectral, sampled classical singers – offers a serenity that unfocuses your perceptions and lets you experience everything more intensely, not less. These records sound elegaic because they are a glimpse of all that's lost and obscured amid the noise of everyday life – the pleasures of *undirected*, *unprofitable* daydreaming.

New Age music is a survival aid, a way back into the world. But ambient music is a chance to imagine the world differently.

★ STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

CLASSIC

Of Woman Born

... being the book that gave a feminist view of motherhood

WITH *Of Woman Born* Adrienne Rich took on a massive task of feminist analysis, autobiography and vision. Her subtitle – 'Motherhood as Experience and Institution' – draws a distinction between what women go through as mothers and what 'motherhood' is held to be. The book is a radical critique of modern Western patriarchy, yet it is also a work of courageously honest, often painful, self-analysis. And this is both its strength and its weakness.

Rich's main achievement is in tracing the 'progressive' suppression and trivialization of Western womanhood from the power it commanded in 'primitive', prehistoric and even medieval human psyche and society. With an acute sense of history and attention to detail, Rich brings to life chilling chapters in the construction of modern Western motherhood. *Hands of Flesh, Hands of Iron* follows the takeover of midwifery by male – often overtly misogynistic – gynaecologists. *The Sacred Calling* outlines the invention of the 'home' in the Industrial Revolution as a private area to which women were to be confined as nest-builders and nurturers – in catastrophic contrast to the pre-industrial integration of home and economic productivity.

Rich's writing owes much to anthropological and Jungian as well as to feminist research and theory; but it is also directly and unflinchingly personal. With artistic (and feminist) integrity, she begins at home, telling the story of her slowly emerging motivation for writing the book – the guilt about her own sons' childhoods, her excruciatingly mixed feelings as a mother and writer, and her urge, once she had started work on the book, to escape into the safe objectivity of archives and theoretical analysis.

Yet with all this honesty she steers clear of self-indulgence. Like her powerful poetry, which is both lyrical and incisive, Rich's exploration of motherhood is a tightly woven web of empathetic chronicling and analysis, liberating insight and purposeful revelation. Her every paragraph is both argument and poem:

'Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has laboured to give birth to the other. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement.'

All in all, Rich has a profound and delicate grasp of the predicament of Western women and an inspiring vision of where we go from

here, at least on an individual level: 'The quality of a mother's life ... is her primary bequest to her daughter.'

But there are times, I feel, when her white middle-class background plays her false and she elides things which should not be elided. There are parallels between sexism and racism, for instance. But I think it is unacceptable to write that: 'The physical and psychic weight of responsibility on the woman with children is by far the heaviest of social burdens. It cannot be compared with slavery or sweated labour because the emotional bonds between a woman and her children make her vulnerable in ways which the forced labourer does not know ...'

Rich's other, related, blind spot is her tendency to assume that her (our) middle-class Western problems are everyone's problems and our liberationist perspective a universal one. In our anxiety to establish sisterhood across cultural and economic barriers – or our eagerness to claim that 'we are oppressed too' and so escape our white guilt – Western feminists have assumed the right to speak for women in other societies, to deplore their oppression and subservience. And we are often offended by these women's rejection of our solidarity.

The unpalatable truth is that educated Western women partake generously of the international power wielded by our unprecedentedly masculine culture. And as members of both dominant and oppressed groups our values and loyalties are divided – rather like Third World elites. We find it hard, from within our cultural perspective, to appreciate how far we have internalized the competitive, individualistic and rationalist habits of mind of our society. But others standing outside see us clearly enough.

Thus Rich's desperately fervent assertion of the awesomeness of goddess images that show women 'at the very centre of what is necessary and sacred' might strike African women, for example, as an unwarranted fuss. The image, she enthuses, is 'beautiful in ways we have almost forgotten. Her body possesses mass, interior depth, inner rest and balance. She is not smiling ...' Such women are to be seen all over Asia and Africa, Bradford and the Southern US – even Italy, Yugoslavia and Ireland. They may not be educated or 'successful' but they know they are awesome and central – and so do their men.

'All human life on the planet is born of woman,' Rich begins her book, with an all-American grand gesture. 'Yet we know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel than about the nature and meaning of motherhood.'

This may be true of many of us. But it is certainly not true for most of 'human life on the planet'.

Yvonne Burgess

Of Woman Born by Adrienne Rich (1976).

Papua New Guinea



ago that most Papua New Guineans would never have seen a white person or even a wheel. Yet now the country is coping with the fast urbanization, labour migrancy and violence that afflicts all modern nations.

Tumultuous though the changes are, no-one starves in PNG. Up to 97 per cent of the land remains in communal hands and 'subsistence affluence' remains an option for the 80 per cent who are rural dwellers. But more broad-based progress and economic growth has eluded the country for much the same reason that it has suffered no coups or dictators: intense, counter-balancing political rivalry based on fluid regional and personal groupings whose ideological shadings are barely discernible.

Since late 1987 PNG has faced its greatest and most murderous challenge: a violent rebellion by alienated young landowners on the south-eastern island of Bougainville. They sought independence from PNG and forced the closure of a huge mine which supplies two per cent of the world's copper.

A ceasefire was agreed in March 1990, after more than 100 lives were lost, and negotiations opened between the rebels and the nation's founding Prime Minister, Michael Somare, concerning a new constitutional arrangement. Port Moresby had been especially anxious because the hostilities threatened the development of major new gold mines and an oilfield, which it saw as the engine for growth in the 1990s.

Internationally, PNG has been seen as a 'bridge' nation between Asia and the South Pacific, a concept about which it remains guarded. As Foreign Secretary Bill Dihm says, 'People walk over bridges'.

Rowan Callick

Leader Head of State Queen Elizabeth II; Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu

Economy GNP per capita US \$740 (US \$18,530)

Monetary unit: PNG Kina

Economy is open and trade-driven, with a freely convertible 'hard' currency. Exports are copper, gold, coffee, cocoa, palm oil, copra, tea, timber and fish.

People 3.6 million

Health Infant mortality: 59 per 1,000 live births (US 10 per 1,000)

Culture Almost entirely Melanesian, the largest nation in the Melanesian Spearhead political forum which links PNG with Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in strong support of independence for the Melanesian Kanaks of French colony New Caledonia.

Religion: Christian, especially Roman Catholic, with continuing animism.

Language: More than 800 languages are spoken. The official languages are English, Pidgin and Mutu.

Sources: State of the World's Children 1990 and information supplied by author.

PORT Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea (PNG), could be any sleepy Australian port town with its sprawling bungalows and smattering of high-rise buildings. But the predominance of Melanesian faces marks the difference.

The country was formed when the British colony of Papua in the south and the German colony of New Guinea in the north were placed under Australian control after World War One – but, it was not granted independence until 1975. PNG rightly prides itself on the natural beauty of its mountains and rainforest but these features have also formed barriers to a sense of nationhood.

Since 1975 the government has changed four times – always constitutionally, either through elections or parliamentary votes. PNG is governed in the Westminster tradition, but because of the diversity of the country, no single group has achieved dominance.

The comparatively late process of development and independence in PNG has led to rapid change. It is not so long

Last profiled in July 1980

At a glance



INCOME DISTRIBUTION



Good, no yawning gap between rich and poor.

1980: **

SELF-RELIANCE

**



Dependent on Australian aid and commodity exports.

1980: **

POSITION OF WOMEN

**



Improving slowly

1980: *

POLITICS

Westminster-style democracy.



1980

LITERACY

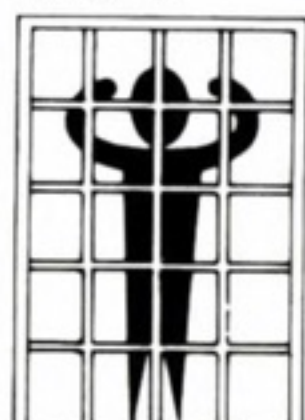
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45%. Poor communications inhibit progress

1980: *

FREEDOM



Proud record of free press recently tarnished by human rights abuses in Bougainville

1980: ***

LIFE EXPECTANCY

*



54 years (US 75 years) Poor performance in health by provincial governments

1980: *



CLASSIFIED

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